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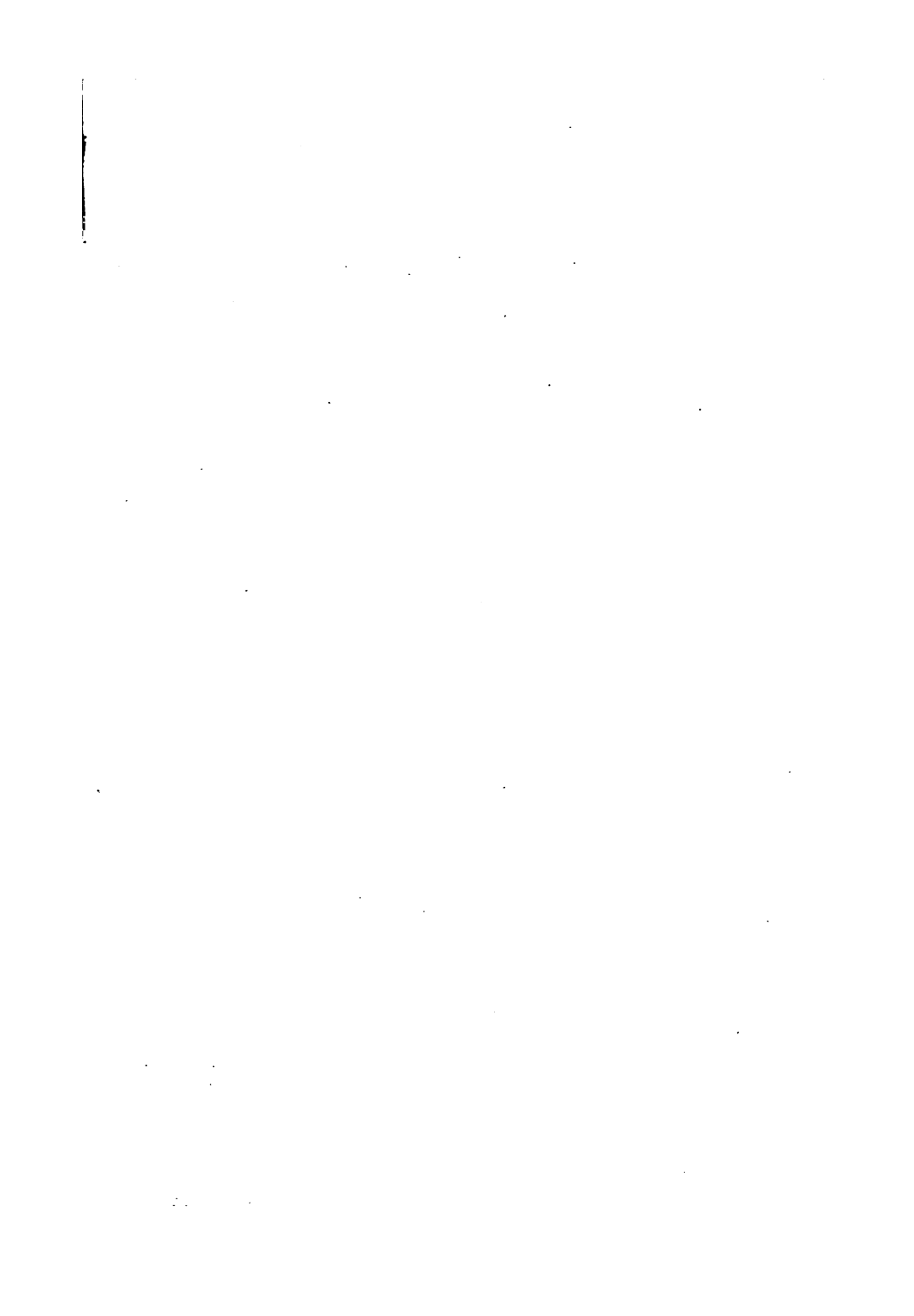
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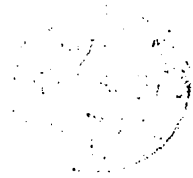




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FROM THISTLES—GRAPES?

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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FROM THISTLES—GRAPES?

CHAPTER I.

ANNE CUNDLEIGH'S STORY.

LET me tell you the quiet story of a quiet woman ; skip it as an irrelevant episode if you will, but as Anne Cundleigh had had a great deal to do for the last year or two with Grace Rosslyn, I should like you to be well acquainted with her. At school, where they first knew each other, Grace had for a time disliked her with all her heart ; that is saying a great deal, for Grace could dislike very heartily when it so pleased her : the new teacher was pale, marked with the small-pox, plain, and un-

attractive, and the want of beauty was a cardinal sin in the eyes of Grace—she was grave and quiet too, and Grace, at this time overflowing with healthful life, was chafed by the inert stillness, as it seemed to her, of Anne Cundleigh.

Grace was rather a troublesome girl at school, she had an inveterate knack of getting into scrapes—tearing her frocks, ink-ing her cuffs, and generally delaying the learning her lessons till the last moment; this was bad enough, but her inveterate habit of dreaming at the wrong times and in the wrong places was worse—she would be repeating a passage of Byron to herself when she ought to be giving her full attention to the construction of a French verb, or the mastering of a difficult passage of Mendelssohn. Anne Cundleigh had a great many things to do besides just teaching music—to look after the girls, keep their

wardrobes in order, and themselves tolerably quiet out of school-hours. It was a hard life, and the girls made it so much the harder. She was conscientious and painstaking, trying to do her best, and to get them to do their best too, and they resented this ; not being used to teachers of Anne Cundleigh's stamp. But there was not one of them showed their dislike so openly as Grace ; just because they were afraid to do so, whereas Grace was afraid of nothing ; she was audacious and rude—more untidy and careless than ever ; as it seemed in sheer defiance of Anne Cundleigh's rule. So matters went on till the scarlet fever broke out in the school. Grace was one of its first victims, and was taken to the infirmary, whither she was soon followed by half-a-dozen others, the rest of the girls being hurriedly sent home. Miss Sharpe, the mistress of the establishment, was

too frightened to do more than call in a doctor, and send the healthy pupils away, and the infected ones upstairs ; she was fearfully afraid of anything contagious, was about as useful in illness as Hood's schoolmistress on the Rhine, and all her energies and anxieties now were concentrated on herself, taking every precaution possible to escape the fever while yet remaining perforce at her post.

It was under these circumstances that Anne Cundleigh came out grandly ; she took the command of the sick-room, nursed the girls night and day, quieted Miss Sharpe's fears, was wonderful in cooling drinks and kind words, so that every girl who was her patient become thoroughly ashamed of her dislike to her, and Grace most of all. With her it was from one extreme to another ; she had disliked this little pale creature, with her neat, orderly

ways, hated her for the scars that disease had left upon her face, detested the unvarying persistence with which she stood up for what she thought right. Now, all these were so many points in her favour. What a relief it was to have such neatness and such order in the sick-room ! As to the marks of the small-pox, they were like a soldier's scars in the eyes of Grace. No doubt Anne Cundleigh had gained them through waging warfare with disease, just as she was doing it now ; and her firm adherence to what she thought right proved an invaluable quality when dealing with patients who *would*, when the disease was at its height, clamour for the very things the doctor had said were most unfit for them ; or with servants who would persist in disobeying orders, and of whom it was difficult to say which was the most trying, their forgetfulness or their ignorance. She

exalted Anne Cundleigh into a heroine, and fell in love with her after her fashion, and resolved that when they two were alone, she would make what amends she could by owning her regret for her past frowardness, and promising quite altered conduct for the future.

She made amends, as matters turned out, after another and still better fashion.

Anne fell ill in her turn just as all the pupils but Grace had recovered and gone home for change of air. Grace had not had the disease itself so violently as some, but the effects lasted longer. She was a long time recovering her strength, and during this convalescence, which might else have been so tedious, it had been pleasant to lie and watch Anne Cundleigh's quiet movements and all her thoughtful care for the girls who had shown themselves such refractory pupils to her. She was idealiz-

ing the quiet little woman, picturing her as one of Miss Nightingale's band, or as the chief agent of succour in a city attacked by cholera or plague. Grace did nothing by halves. Anne Cundleigh, from being before disliked, ridiculed, had now become an object of the greatest affection and reverence. She had set this most unpretending of all creatures on a pedestal, just as she had set her cousin, and was ready to worship her after another fashion, just as much as she worshipped him.

Anne had the fever: not violently or dangerously. The very illness seemed to take her in a characteristic form. There was no raving or delirium as there had been with most of the girls, but just a quiet unconsciousness of all around, which was the best thing that could happen to her, as it prevented her being distressed by Miss Sharpe's horror at learning that the

teacher, upon whom she had so relied, had fallen ill in her turn. "It was everyway so inconvenient, just as she was going to the sea-side, and just as the house was to be purified preparatory for the pupils' return, for Miss Cundleigh to be taken ill. If she would but have put it off till she got home!" said Miss Sharpe to Grace, who, being now out of quarantine, had volunteered to tell her that Miss Cundleigh was unable to rise that morning and to all appearance was suffering from the fever.

"I don't see how she could do that," said Grace. "We'd all of us have put off the fever altogether if we could, ma'am."

"She must have felt it coming on last night," said Miss Sharpe, "and there would have been time then."

"She only complained of her head, and her head has been aching every night for the last week, which, with all it has to carry,

is no wonder. Any one's head would ache with such a burthen," said Grace.

"But what is to be done?" said Miss Sharpe helplessly. She would almost have risked the chance of contagion if she could have consulted Anne herself as to what was to be done with her, but there was no one to take advice of unless it might be Grace, who was to go home that morning.

"Send for Dr. Macree back again," said Grace, "and when papa comes for me tell him I am going to stay here and nurse Miss Cundleigh. There's nobody else to do it. I never *did* nurse any one in my life, but I think it's time I made a beginning. Miss Cundleigh lent me Miss Nightingale's book while I was ill, so I dare say I sha'n't go very far wrong."

"But your papa won't allow it," said Miss Sharpe, feeling at the same time what

a blessing it would be if he would. Grace from a girl of sixteen seemed to have shot up into a woman of six-and-twenty, strong-willed, self-reliant. Miss Sharpe looked at her admiringly.

"I always *did* like those plucky girls," she thought; "they're hard to rule, and always getting into scrapes, but there's something in them after all."

"Yes, papa will," said Grace. "He has a great notion of justice. Miss Cundleigh has nursed me when she only came into the school to teach me music and keep me in order—if she could; well, I'm going to nurse her, because it's right I should, that's all: papa will see it and understand it perfectly. When Miss Cundleigh's better we'll go home to the Grange together. I shall drive her about all day, and read to her all the evening. But just now I don't think it would be right of me to go home,

because as the fever has broken out in Miss Cundleigh, and I've been bending over her, perhaps I may carry it with me. I hope I haven't given it to you, Miss Sharpe."

"Oh, good gracious!" screamed Miss Sharpe. "I always said if ever I had a fever I should die. Nothing but my strong sense of duty kept me here while it was about. Do stand farther off, that's a good girl. Do you mind my opening the window? You won't catch cold. Where's my aromatic vinegar? But what a heroine you are to be sure! My dear Grace, when your young friends return, I shall hold you up to them as an example of self-devotion and disinterestedness. I can't tell you how rejoiced I am that the example I have set you all during this most trying time has borne such fruit already—go to Miss Cundleigh, my dear love—how I should

like to kiss you, but my terrible susceptibility to contagion, and the consciousness that a life like mine ought not to be too lightly imperilled, prevent my gratifying my feelings! But you may rely upon it I shall place your conduct before your papa in its proper light. If *he* says you may remain you have my fullest sanction to do so, and ought to win Miss Cundleigh's eternal gratitude."

Grace went upstairs, and Miss Sharpe sprinkled herself with aromatic vinegar and burnt a pastille to fumigate the room, after which she despatched a note for Dr. Macree, desiring the servants to show him to her before he went upstairs, as this last shock to her nerves was more than she was prepared for. After that, while awaiting the Doctor, she took a little red lavender in water, and arranged her dress preparatory to receiving Mr. Rosslyn.

Grace was now in the sick-room, and she went to work much as she had seen Anne Cundleigh do. When fresh air had been admitted, the tumbled pillow smoothed, the poor hot head bathed and cooled, and everything that could militate against that exquisite neatness in which Anne so delighted, sent away or arranged in proper order, she sat down by the bedside waiting for Dr. Macree. He was long in coming, having been away from home when Miss Sharpe's note arrived, and Anne opened her eyes before he made his appearance.

She looked conscious now—more like herself—if it had not been for the deep red spots fast coming out, Grace might have thought that nothing worse ailed her than a rather worse head-ache than usual, and she spoke rationally enough.

“When are you going home? I thought your papa was coming for you.”

"So he is, but I shall not go with him. I'm going to stay with you."

"I'm afraid I'm ill," said Mrs. Cundleigh, through all the fever flush and spots a pallor showed, as she thought of what her illness would entail upon the poor little household at home.

"Yes, you're ill. You're going to have the fever like the rest of us," said Grace, "and I'm going to nurse you through it. I never did nurse any one, but I think I shall do better than that thick-headed Ann or that careless Jane, and at any rate I shall be better than any Mrs. Gamp Miss Sharpe might have in. When you get better you'll go home with me to the Grange. I've settled it all with Miss Sharpe, and she's going to send my father away."

"But—but I don't understand," said Anne. What did this change mean in

the girl who had been so unruly and froward? Certainly, she had been gentle enough in the last few days, but that was hardly more than might have been expected under the changed circumstances; but what could cause this sudden devotion to herself?

"I'll tell you," said Grace; "but you mustn't talk. You kept us all quiet when we were ill, now I'm going to keep you so. I've got to like you very much; I'm ashamed of the way I behaved to you. I was a brute and a pig, and you must let me nurse you and get you well, or else I shall never be happy again the longest day I live."

Then she burst into tears, and the patient had to lecture the nurse upon exciting herself in her still delicate health, and the nurse had to tell the patient only to think of herself, and to remember that she had

nothing to do but to lie there and get well.

“But you’re not strong enough for nursing,” said Anne.

“I’m strong enough to nurse *you*,” was the reply; “if it were Milly Green or Bertie Dale, it would be another thing. What a fuss those girls made when they were ill, to be sure! But it will be quite another thing with you. You were always quiet—you’ll be quieter now than ever. And you’ll give no trouble—no, not even if your mind goes wandering—that you can possibly help. If there were hospitals in heaven and angels in it that wanted nursing, they’d be just like you. Besides, I *must* do it. If you did but know all I’ve gone through while you’ve been half-killing yourself with slaving night and day for me and the rest, you’d see that the kindest thing you could do would be to let me wait

upon you just a little. Talk of coals of fire! oh, good gracious, Miss Cundleigh, how you've been heaping them on my head all this time. Don't be so cruel as to keep them there, and insist upon my leaving you."

"You were no worse than the others," said Anne, putting out her poor hot hand to take hold of Grace's cold one.

"Yes, I was," said Grace, squeezing the hand she held. "All the school looks up to me because I'm the cleverest in it. I *am* clever; I suppose it's being so much with my cousin in the holidays; there wasn't much in the school to bring the cleverness out of one. I suppose it's no worse than other girls' schools, but it's certainly no better. How I should like, if ever I had the money, to start a model boarding-school, and have you for the superintendent. But there, I mustn't talk—

only you let me stop, unless you want to make me wretched for life. As to my not being strong enough, don't be afraid, I've plenty of strength to last as long as you want me."

Dr. Macree came after a time, and Grace shyly acquainted him with the patient's symptoms, and took his directions respecting her as gravely as if she had been used to sick nursing from her cradle.

"But how about yourself, young lady?" said the doctor, when he had concluded.

"I shall do," said Grace; "people are always strong enough for what they really want to do, and I really do want to do this. Don't cross me, doctor, and say I can't."

A minute after, Mr. Rosslyn was at the school. He had driven over in a hired close carriage that Grace might not catch cold, to fetch her, and Miss Sharpe was busy telling him of Grace's self-devotion

and heroism in a style that fairly puzzled John Rosslyn, her words were so many, and some of them so long. But he scouted the idea of leaving the house without seeing his daughter. He laughed at Miss Sharpe's dread of contagion, and so Grace was summoned down, and when she came her father took her in his arms and kissed her heartily, Miss Sharpe standing by the while sniffing at her flask of aromatic vinegar.

"Grace, child, what's this? You're only out of a sick bed yourself, and you want to nurse somebody that's down on one."

"It's Miss Cundleigh, father, and you'll break my heart if you make me leave her. If you only knew what a life I and the other girls led her before we were taken ill"—then Grace saw Miss Sharpe, and thought it better to say nothing more on that point for fear of ulterior consequences to her schoolfellows. "But I want to stop

with her, and nurse her—the servants don't know how—and there's no getting any one into the house, they're all such cowards. We should have died—every one of us—if it hadn't been for Miss Cundleigh. She caught the fever in nursing us. It's only fair that one of us should nurse her in turn."

"You're a good lass," said John Rosslyn, "but I doubt your spirit's better than your strength. What does the doctor say?"

Then Dr. Macree, who had by this time come into the room, gave it as his opinion that Miss Rosslyn would suffer less by having her own way than by being denied it. "At any rate, it's the only chance for the other poor thing," was his thought, and so Grace remained, and nursed Anne triumphantly through all, and they came home together to the Grange, and Nurse Stokes fed them up with jellies and beef-

tea, chickens and new-laid eggs, till Grace was her own healthful buoyant self again, and in Anne Cundleigh's pale cheeks a faint gleam like a wintry rose showed forth at last.

"I shall stand by you when we go back to school," said Grace one day; "let any one of them put on you if they dare! I hope you've forgiven me by this," she added, penitently, "and some day, perhaps, you'll like me a little. Do you know, I like you very much indeed?"

Anne looked at her with a strange dreaminess in her eyes, such as Grace would have thought could never have shone in them. "Like you," she said, "oh, Grace! if you knew all that you have done for me. What a return for what I did! So different from that which was given me once."

She clasped her thin pale hands together

—Grace was sure she found it hard to keep from crying. What had moved her so? Was it the heat of the day, or was she still so weak from her illness?

“Let us go in,” said Grace, “I have tired you with my chatter; you shall lie down, and I won’t come near you for an hour.”

“I like this best,” said Anne, “it is so sweet after the four walls of the school-room, and I like you too, Grace, near me; your chatter never tires.”

They were sitting in the wood, near the very spot where, two years afterwards, Grace first espied Dick Girling. The day was sultry and oppressive, so that Grace had brought Anne there directly after breakfast, as the best place to beguile the long hot hours. She had told her the legend of the wood, brought her flowers, and had a short session on their significance, then read

some pages of Elizabeth Browning, and at last had wandered into a discourse which had led to the conversation I have quoted.

It was no wonder that Anne liked to sit in the wood, where the thick greenery above shut out all glare of the sun, and only let in such a softened light as might have streamed down a cathedral aisle ; where the twittering of the birds, or the rich melodies into which, now and then, some exultant songster broke forth, formed such a blessed contrast to the jingling of the piano, or the untrained voices of girls to whom nature had denied every qualification of a singer but the ambition ; and no wonder that Grace's chatter did not weary her—Grace, who was giving to the poor unlovely teacher a devotion and affection she would never have thought it possible she could call forth.

“Gracie,” she said, suddenly, “I didn’t think, when you and the rest fell ill, and I volunteered to do what I could for you, I was earning such a reward as you have given me. Shall I tell you the reward that was given me once for such a service as I rendered you ?”

Grace nestled up to her, and placed her arm around her. What change was it that had come over Anne Cundleigh ? she was no longer the school teacher,—grave and almost prim, looking an embodiment of rules and proprieties,—still less was she the heroine of saintly duty Grace had been making her,—she was just a woman some years older than Grace, with a sorrow weighing her down, and a grief that Grace was sure had a romance and a tenderness about it.

Anne Cundleigh had a story ! And the story turned upon love ; she was a heroine

still, only after a softer, lovelier fashion than Grace had imagined her. With her own unspoken precious secret, this was something to make her turn yet more lovingly to Anne—Anne, who might have been wronged, slighted, deceived, but yet who stood on the same level with her, inasmuch as she had loved, and for a time, at least, had been loved again.

“I was pretty once,” said Anne; “but it is a long time ago. I am only five-and-thirty now, though I suppose I look a great deal older. We were living at C——, some years ago. My father’s congregation was not what it had been—he was already failing in strength, and could not undertake a large ministry with many duties—but it was better than it is here, and there was no need for me to go out teaching to add to his income. People thought a great deal of my playing then, especially

one family of the congregation, where the mamma was very musical, and wished her daughters to become so too. I was there a great deal—often of an evening—and then the only son, (I won't tell you his surname, Grace; you might meet him by-and-bye in after life, and I shouldn't like you to be prejudiced against him if you did, so we will call him Walter)—well, Walter used to come in after business; his father was a manufacturer, one of the wealthiest in the place, and Walter, when of age, was to have a share in the business. He liked my playing too, but he liked me better after a while, and I wasn't very hard to win, Gracie, though I dare say you have often thought that I had never had a love-dream in my life. I had it then! ah! dear, that what was never to be anything *but* a dream should be so sweet—I was so happy. Gracie, dear, some day, who knows how

soon, such happiness may come to you ; then think of me, and pray that no such blight as mine may ever rest on you ! It seems as if it could not be *me*—that girl who all those years ago thought heaven had come to earth, and the gods were walking among men, just because one of them told her of his love. Well, his people did not like it, they had other views for him, and my father, hearing this, was as stern on his part as they were on theirs, and I was very wretched, at least I thought I was wretched then—I wonder now how I dared, with Walter loving me and sharing my trouble. Wretched ! and through it all, Walter declaring he was mine, and nothing should part us !

“They were not unkind or unjust, his people. It was only natural they should wish him to look higher than the minister’s daughter ; but finding that he would think

of nobody else, his father temporised a little with him. He should go away for a couple of years — there was a branch house of theirs abroad where there was an opening for him. If he worked well during his absence, and came back in the same frame of mind that he went away, and I was still unchanged, they would throw no further obstacles in his way. How eagerly he accepted this offer! *He* change—he forget!—he laughed at the bare idea, and went away rejoicing and triumphant in the thought that at last a way had been found for him to win me.

“I was as confident as himself; the dread of losing him altogether made the separation of two years seem nothing. I had no fear of him—it was his people only that I dreaded, and they and my father had promised their consent if we

were still true to each other when the two years had past.

“They were not long in gliding by. I think those two years, though Walter was away, were the happiest time of all my life. He wrote constantly—hopefully—happily—picturing the home that he would give me—the bright days we were to live together. To know, to feel that I was so loved—so worked for, was enough even without his presence—enough to make the days go by as fleetly as only happy days can pass, and at last, at the end, Walter came home.

“His family had hardly expected him so soon. They thought that he would travel after the fashion of other travellers,—but he had gone on night and day. They were not at C—— when he came, having gone to a little sea-side watering place, twelve

miles off, while the house in the town was being renovated and painted. He had gone there first as a matter of duty, but I think he was not sorry when he found his family away, and the house in such a state that his sleeping there was impossible, so that he had to come to us and throw himself on my father's hospitality. It was too late and he was too tired, to travel another twelve miles, and so that night he was to sleep under our roof and go to Sandstone early in the morning. He had won the evening with me, he said, by his speed in journeying; he ought not to be defrauded of the privilege he had won. How happy we were that night! How handsome he looked! How full he was of the life abroad — of the men and things that he had seen! and when we were alone — my mother contrived that for us for a few minutes — how tenderly he spoke of the future! Oh,

Gracie ! Gracie ! I think I see his eyes yet as they were fixed upon my face, fixed with a look that after that night they were never to wear again.

“The next morning he was late in coming down ; at last my father went to his room, and found him ill, feverish and wandering. We sent for a medical man—my father himself went to Sandstone to tell the news to his family, and his mother came back at once to see him. But when she heard, what by that time we knew, that it was the small-pox which had seized her son, she shrank terrified from going near him. She was a handsome woman yet, and she valued her beauty highly ; she was scared and helpless. His father did what he could—sent in a nurse ; there was no possibility of removal even if we would have let him go : no other house in the town would open to receive him, and their own in its

present condition was utterly unfit for the purpose.

“I was glad of it ; glad that through all this terrible illness I was to have him near me. I could know every day—every hour—how he was progressing, and as to the risk to myself, I laughed at that. My mother looked grave and anxious, perhaps she was thinking of her daughter’s beauty just as Walter’s mother thought of her own. But she was a good woman and the course here lay clear. I believe she would have taken the post by Walter as if he had been her own son, only that her infirmities made it difficult for her to cross the room.

“The nurse was installed in her place. How jealous I was of that nurse ! To think of her having the right to wait and serve by night and day where I dared not go near ! Then I suspected she was inefficient. I suppose she was much like

others of her trade ; but she would kill my Walter, I was persuaded, through sheer inattention—this fat lethargic woman, who thought only of her comforts. If I could only have taken her place ! if I could only have ministered to my Walter, I should save him I was sure, while this woman would let the flickering life slip through her fingers.

“One day I was passing the room stealthily and I heard Walter’s voice. He was calling eagerly—wildly, for drink. I listened—it was so long since I had heard his voice, and then in such altered tones. Still he repeated the cry, and there seemed no one to heed him. I heard another sound which explained the inattention. That dreadful woman, who I knew would kill my Walter, was asleep. Could I let him lie there with parched lips and burning throat, while she was too lost in slumber to hear him ? My poor, poor Walter ! The cry was like a

child's—so pitiful in its helplessness. I went in, gave him the draught, and took my place by him. Could I help doing it? Could I think of danger to myself at such a moment? Could I do otherwise, when I looked round and saw that the doctor's directions had not been attended to, the medicine not administered, but determine that I would take my place, and at any risk to myself remain there till the end—whatever the end might become?

“I nursed him round; they said he would never have weathered through but for me. I know it was a hard fight for him, but he conquered; and then, my task done, I lay down in my turn, just as I did with you, Gracie, only I had a harder time of it than in the fever, and a weary ending to my illness. The disease had scarcely left a scar on Walter, but with me it was quite different. It was long before they would

let me see a glass—longer still before I saw Walter. I don't think I had ever been very vain, but I had cried bitterly after that one look at my disfigured face. But what the glass had told me was nothing to what Walter's eyes did the first time they rested on me. But he was very good—he was a man, Grace, and things are so different with them to what they are with us. Let him have been scarred as he might—burned by fire—with not a line or trace of all the beauty that yet I had loved so well, remaining—still, still I should have loved him all the same, and even more, because so much more he would have needed my pity.

“But he tried hard not to let me see he felt the change. And his people were very good. Father and mother said they owed their son to me, and did their best to hide how scared and shocked they were by my

changed face. Indeed, once when I spoke of it, his mother said he ought to love me the better for it—but he was a man and how could he? I didn't blame him. I thought my heart would break, and I wished—oh! how I wished, Gracie, that I had died. When I saw him, day after day, shrinking back—when I saw that all the warmth and the gladness had left his love—what was there for me but to do what I did and set him free?"

"And he let you!" said Grace passionately. "The false, mean-souled thing. How could he do it? If ever I were to know that man how I should hate him!"

"He couldn't help it, Gracie—I never blamed him. If he could have gone on loving me he would have done so. He did his best to hide that love had gone. It was not his fault that he did not dissemble more carefully."

"Oh, Anne, what a woful story! And you have gone living on! If such a story ever had been mine, I must have died. Life would have seemed impossible to bear."

She thought of herself, if ever Charles Rosslyn were to give his love to another! She was only sixteen now, but already his love had become the one great treasure of her life. If she were to lose that, all might go. What would there be left for her then? "Behold, we count them happy who endure." But the happiness of endurance in such a case would have been impossible to Grace.

"I had to live," said Anne, "and to make the best of my life, too. I had a father and mother left, Gracie."

"I hope this Walter didn't prosper," said Grace, vengefully. "He should have married, and had his wife desert him, or

his money take wing and fly away, or himself die early, and wish in his last illness that he had you *then* to nurse him."

"Nothing of the sort has come to pass," said Anne. "He is married, and I believe is happy in his marriage. I know that he is rich and prosperous, and living in his native city."

"Then there doesn't seem to be any justice in the world," said Grace.

"Yes there is, but we don't understand the way it is meted out. Now, Grace, you know my story—just the one bit of romance in my life. I don't know what has led me to speak of it to you—we never allude to it at home. You must forget all about it when we go back together, unless——"

"Well, unless?"

"Unless, Gracie, you should need a warn-

ing—if you are ever inclined to trust too much, or to hope too fondly.”

“The warning would never deter me,” said Grace; “and if I found it had been needed, why, I might be tempted to verify the old story of which I have been telling you, and let the pool claim its third victim.”

But after this Grace was, if possible, fonder than ever of Anne Cundleigh. She stood up for her womanfully when they returned to Miss Sharpe's. She took her under her protecting wing when, at her mother's death, Anne went home to keep house for her father, and the two came to live together at St. Ewald's. The old minister's heart had warmed to the girl before he saw her; he was prepared to find in Anne's young champion, a generous, self-devoted creature, but this warm, fresh, young nature made him in his turn feel almost young again. The happiest days

.

Hugh Cundleigh had known for years were those spent in fighting his battles over again in Grace's hearing. John Rosslyn was civil after his fashion to the old man, and Grace was allowed to be as liberal in her benefactions from farm-yard and garden as she pleased, but the two very wisely saw but little of each other, having perhaps an instinctive feeling that neither would have liked the other better on nearer acquaintance. But Anne Cundleigh had been good to his girl at school—that was enough to induce John Rosslyn to overlook the fact that her father was a dissenting minister, and a man whose political opinions were enough, in his belief, to set the world upside down. Nurse Stokes, too, approved of the intimacy.

“Miss Cundleigh's a rare tidy body with her own clothes—reason good, she's need to—and may be she'll teach Miss Grace in

time to leave off ripping and rending, as she's allus a-doin'."

So this was how the intimacy had grown and prospered between two so unlike as Anne Cundleigh, the minister's daughter, and Miss Rosslyn, the heiress of the Grange and the daughter of the most stiff-necked churchman in all Eastshire.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. PAYNE'S INMATE.

JUST at the border-land where town and country meet, with fields spreading far away in the front, and the long white road stretching beyond, past farm-houses and meadows, was the cottage of the minister of the Old Town Meeting House. It had a neighbour, Mrs. Payne's, and the only other habitations were those of labourers and mechanics employed in the shops of St. Ewald's. These two dwellings stood a little apart from the others, separated from the last of them by a small

field and a narrow road that led back into the middle of the town, and though small, they had some pretensions to gentility and refinement, and were regarded with all the respect, by the inhabitants of the humbler dwellings, that their own pretensions, and the position of their respective occupants demanded.

Mrs. Payne was a curate's widow; she had a small, a *very* small income, and she added to it by letting her front parlour and bed-room, and at present the gentleman Anne Cundleigh had spoken of as Mr. Ross occupied them. Mr. Ross—otherwise Hartley Rosslyn. When that good Samaritan, Mr. Chubb, had allowed this poor wayfarer the shelter of his roof, he found that his anticipations that his benevolence would meet its due reward had been correct ones. Mrs. Horton felt that this stranger, thrown on her mercy almost at her very gates, must be cared

for. She promised Mrs. Chubb ample remuneration for the trouble he would cause her, and engaged the neat little upper room Mima usually occupied for him, Mima going out to sleep at her grandmother's. She employed her own medical attendant, and seconded him admirably. Hartley Rosslyn was cured, to a great extent in spite of himself. He had crept under the cottage porch on the night of the storm, feebly hoping that he should find his last rest there. He had sunk down on the stone seat, wet, bruised, weary in body, and with that dull, dead sickness of the heart for which there seems but one cure. And he had felt as if that cure must come to him at last. He had borne with life for the last five-and-twenty years, hoping that at length his sin would be forgotten, and he might come back and dwell among his own again. And his own had cast him from

them. Brother and friend had told him there was no place for him here ; and the son, upon whose face he had hoped to look, whose strong young arm was to be the prop of his weakness, whose children he had hoped in time to see round his knee, was never to know that he was still among the living. This was what he had waited for ; it was for this he had saved from his slender earnings enough to prevent his asking his kindred for maintenance when he came amongst them. After all the years his shame stared him in the face, and his sin told him that he had not yet reaped its full reward.

What then was there for him but to die ? He *ought* to be dead, so he told himself when he crept under the porch ; and now these people, with their mistaken kindness, had brought him back to life. They were very good to him, one and all.

Mrs. Horton was in her element in a sick-room, and her heart warmed to any one who required help from her, and quietly, without any noise or disturbance, little luxuries which were needed for his comfort were brought in to supplement the deficiencies of Mima's chamber. Softer pillows for his head, an easy chair when he was able to sit upright, the soups and wine the doctor ordered, and fresh flowers, fruit, books, and papers, which were hardly included in his regimen ; and then, finding he was a gentleman and an educated man, Mr. Horton came day after day to favour the invalid with the history of his last new specimen, or a discussion of the newest discovery made by the Archæological Society. But he would not get well with all their care, till Mr. Hesketh prescribed something which had a wonderful effect.

“This poor fellow does not want to live,” he had said to Mrs. Horton. “He feels all your goodness, but at the same time would rather you had shown it to some one else. Send Letty to him. She’ll be worth a dozen lotions. Let him only look at her, and the very sight of her face will almost make him in love with a world of which, I suspect, he has good reason to be weary.”

It was not much that the old lawyer saw of Mr. Ross before he went away, but that little was enough to convince him that the object of Mrs. Horton’s kindness had a story, and a sad one,—a mystery, and a secret—“Enough to make him the hero of three volumes,” thought Mr. Hesketh, “if he were only twenty years younger—only, perhaps, the mystery may not be romantic enough for the purpose. It is possible that he may simply be in

hiding from his creditors. He *may* have run away from his own wife, or with another man's, and be afraid of the consequences. I don't know: there's more weakness than wickedness in him. If he's alive and well when I come here again—and that good creature, Mrs. Horton, is safe to pull him to shore whether he will or no—I should like to learn something more of him. Any way, if anything can do the poor devil good it will be Letitia's face and voice."

And then Mr. Hesketh went back to London—to his den, as he grimly called a handsome, well-furnished house in Brunswick Square; and Mrs. Horton, who had long given up all hope of bettering his condition for him, could not let him go without uttering a faint regret at the lonely home to which he was returning.

"My dear lady, I am used to it," said

Mr. Hesketh. "My loneliness, thanks to my housekeeper, is less intolerable than you suppose. The boys are to come to me at Christmas, remember :—I think, old bachelor as I am, I know how to do my duty by boys that visit me. In Launce I have the liveliest interest. That move of his in persuading you to extend your hospitality to the Doctor to prevent the consequences of his uncomplimentary remarks, was a masterly stratagem. Only send that boy to the bar, and I'll charge myself with his future."

So Letty came to Hartley Rosslyn's room, and he brightened up at her first visit. He had all an artist's enjoyment of beauty, of delicate colourings, soft tones, and graceful lines. And he had the innate tendency of a gentleman to like loveliness the better for being graceful and cultured. He had been so long shut out from the

society of his own countrypeople, that this young English gentlewoman, with her refined bearing, her fresh simple dress, her soft womanly intelligence, was an inexpressible delight to him. He did not fall in love with her. He was nearly fifty, and in feelings and constitution at least twenty years older. But he grew as fond of her as a father of a daughter ; and one day a little secret that he surprised made him take a keener interest than ever in her, and did him an infinite amount of good, by making him feel there was something in life, after all, worth concerning himself about.

It was only a deeper flush on the cheeks, a brighter light in the eyes, when Mrs. Horton informed her, in his hearing, that Mr. Rosslyn was coming to croquet that afternoon, and Charles Rosslyn's father understood it all. For in the few weeks

that had elapsed since the day he had first seen Miss Lisdale at the sessions, the Rev. Charles had kept the promise he had made himself, and, simply because it was the most imprudent thing he could do, had made Mr. Horton's acquaintance. It was not a difficult thing to do. Launce had spoken of him as a "brick, the only decent fellow in the school," and Mrs. Horton was quite disposed to think well of any one in whom her son took pleasure. She sent him an invitation to croquet—croquet, in Mrs. Horton's estimation, was the foremost invention of the nineteenth century. She had never handled a mallet in her life, but still croquet was her especial delight.

"It brought people together," she said, "and to bring people together for a little time was the first great step towards bringing them together after such fashion that they should never part again." But

she had no intentions of this kind towards Mr. Charles Rosslyn, and he had no "intentions," either, beyond making the acquaintance of a very pretty girl. He did not mean to fall in love with her—he did not mean her to fall in love with him. He was neither a male flirt nor a coxcomb, and yet he had not been three times in Letty Lisdale's society before he had told himself that if ever he dared dream of any woman as his wife, it should be her, and she knew, by an instinct, that even a girl as modest as herself could hardly be without, that some such thought as this had crossed his mind. She was not angry with him for harbouring such a thought—she was not angry with herself for not being angry with him—she was just now in the delicious debatable ground that lies between liking and love, and all the sweet coy happiness she felt in knowing that love

had come to him, had not, as yet, opened her eyes to the fact that it might very possibly come to her.

Only that blush and that light told Hartley Rosslyn a great deal more than she knew herself. He had so much of the woman in him that even Mrs. Horton did not learn more from it than he. His perceptions on many points were fully as keen as hers. The lady blamed herself for her imprudence, and resolved that, unless she saw good reason to change her mind, this coming croquet party should be the very last to which she would invite the Rev. Charles. She had her duty to perform by her husband's ward, and that duty consisted not merely in marrying her, but in marrying her prudently and well. And there couldn't be much prudence in her taking a clergyman who had not even a cure.

Still Mrs. Horton was not a woman to leave love altogether out of her calculations, and it was quite possible that if she thought these two young people would suffer if prudence was allowed to have too much voice in the matter, she might be inclined to take a view of the whole affair such as few chaperones would be disposed to do.

Hartley Rosslyn thought not of prudence at all. This girl loved his son, or was on the high road to love. That was enough to rouse him from the dreamy apathetic languor into which he had fallen. Letitia Lisdale had done something for him. There was some good, after all, in the world which held her; but Letitia Lisdale in love with his son gave life at once a zest and interest which he had never thought again to feel. He had erred in his time, this man, but at least his errors

had never arisen from any undue self-love, and now he was aroused from the hopeless weariness of existence into which he had fallen, simply by throwing himself into the love dreams and troubles of these two young creatures.

He had a feverish desire to behold the son for whom this girl cared, and at the same time he felt that now more than ever he must keep the fact of his existence a secret from him. "If he is like what I was he would not marry her," he said to himself. He had done this evil thing years ago, and yet he knew how its knowledge would affect his son, and how, in that son's position, he himself would have acted. He resolved to go away—not too far, but where neither his brother nor Glynne should ever see him, and now and then he would come back to the neighbourhood and hear how matters progressed.

Something he remembered his brother telling him of a mutual fancy between their children. Then he felt troubled for Letitia, only for a moment—it was not likely, he told himself, that such a girl would give her love unsought. John must be mistaken—he was not likely to be very keen-eyed in such matters, “and yet it was good of him too, to wish that such a thing might be,” he said, humbly and sorrowfully; and he felt half sorry for his brother’s disappointment, though it was impossible for him to wish for any other bride than Letitia Lisdale for his son.

He grew better and stronger; to a certain extent, the wish for life seemed to make life possible, but his limbs suffered from that night’s exposure to the storm, long after his general health was in great measure restored. It seemed not unlikely that he would be a cripple for a considerable time,

and he found his intention of leaving the neighbourhood frustrated for a while. To travel at all was out of the question for a time ; the utmost he could hope for was that he might leave Mr. Chubb's cottage for a more suitable residence, and this offered itself in the house of Mrs. Payne.

"Where you can stay till quite recovered," said Mrs. Horton, "and we shall be able to see to you nearly as well as here."

She was almost in love with her patient, he had been so docile and manageable. At first she had been afraid that in spite of his docility he would refuse to recover ; but of late the progress he had made had been so creditable to her nursing that she felt as if he had paid her a personal compliment in getting well so far. He was a gentleman, too, there was no question of that, and the idea that he had some story

which perhaps he did not care to tell, only added to his interest in her eyes. He had given her some account of himself, but that it was not a full and true account Mrs. Horton felt sure, although she listened to it with an appearance of the sweetest and most implicit belief. She was to all appearance quite ready to credit him with being nothing more than a teacher of his own language and literature at a little town in Germany, who had revisited his native land on some matter of business, and had lost his way in the darkness and storm, and who, having lived so long abroad that he had outlived all the ties which had connected him with his native country, felt himself only too grateful to those who had taken pity on the stranger at their gates, and succoured him in his need. The mystery—the something kept back which she was sure there was about him, only in-

terested Mrs. Horton yet more in him; and she was a woman who could not help caring for any one simply because they needed her care. To be dependent on her kindness was of itself claim enough to ensure it. And so, long before Hartley Rosslyn's partial recovery, she had grown to feel an interest that, if it had not been that he was ten years her senior, might have been termed almost motherly. But, indeed, she was a woman in whom the maternal element was so strong that it would be sure to be drawn forth by any one requiring her solitude. Eight, eighteen, or eighty, mattered little if they were in need of her.

Hartley Rosslyn had made very magnanimous resolutions about leaving the neighbourhood where his son dwelt, but he was not sorry when he found that for a time at least it would be impracticable. He was quite content to let himself be placed

in Mrs. Payne's charge till such time as he should recover the use of his limbs, when he resolved that nothing should prevent his removing elsewhere; but, in the meantime, the inevitable necessity of waiting was something almost worth the fear of being crippled for life. He had meant to be true and self-denying, and, hard as it might be, leave the neighbourhood of St. Ewald's, without even seeing his son; and now he was compelled to stop, it might be for months, so near him that it would be strange indeed if some blessed chance did not once at least bring father and son in contact.

And he had so much of the woman in him that but to look upon him though unknown, to hold his hand although unrecognized, to greet him by his name, although the other should never know that they owned that name in common, was something

that would repay to the poor heart all the weary voyage across the sea, the fruitless quest in search of home and kindred, the buffeting of the storm, the long illness that had succeeded—almost the being told by brother and friend that he had now no rightful place in the country that had been his own.

After all the years it was not much to hope or to ask for. Surely this drop of comfort might be given to the lips that had been so long athirst.

CHAPTER III.

THE MINISTER'S GARDEN.

CROFT COTTAGES, Nos. 1 and 2, stood, as I have said, side by side, a little distance from St. Ewald's. The present autumn day they were almost hidden in the masses of bloom and foliage that clustered round and over them. Sweet-scented clematis, majestic late blooming wisteria, autumn roses, purple convolvulus, grew over each; and the two tiny front gardens were full, the one of hollyhocks, dahlias, French marigolds, honey-smelling scabious, asters, and nasturtiums, growing

thick, the one upon the other, mingling buds, leaves, and blossoms in one confused tangle of bloom and sweetness, and the other of verbenas, scarlet geraniums, yellow calceolarias, and blue lobelias, arrayed in geometrical patterns, every plant trimly holding its own position at a respectful distance from its neighbour.

Evidently the occupants of the two cottages were of different minds as regarded their gardens. Mrs. Payne had not had the heart to lop and trim the branches of the creeping plants that grew over her house in common with Mr. Cundleigh's; she had tried her best to reduce them into something like order, but the sturdy climbers were too many for her feeble rule; but in the garden beds and borders she chose to be as sternly neat as in her house; and, at the back, even the small space set aside for a kitchen garden

was as trim as the flower-beds near the house ; while, if possible, Mr. Cundleigh's flowers ran riot even more luxuriantly in the rear than in the front. The vegetables were kept in a little more order. The flowers, he said, liked their liberty, and were the better for it, but it was needful that the potatoes and cabbages should not have too much their own way if any benefit was to be derived from them.

Through almost a thicket of roses and sweet-peas—so closely had they grown as nearly to block up what had once been ample space for two to pass—Grace and Anne Cundleigh found their way to the back of the house, and then, hearing voices, Anne stopped, and laying her hand on Grace's arm, said :

“ There's Mr. Ross ; papa has helped him through. Now, Gracie, look, he's scarcely a subject for the gout, is he ? ”

There was a bower which Mr. Cundleigh had formed himself of bent stakes, overgrown with hops and scarlet-runners. It was just in keeping with everything else in the garden, wild, untrained, green, fresh, bright and fragrant; and in this Mr. Cundleigh and the lodger from next door were sitting. It was near the house, and as you sat within it, you looked down on all the maze of flowers twining together in the inextricable confusion of twisting stalk and tendril, and mixing their colours, scarlet, blue, and yellow, in a style enough to drive a nursery gardener crazy. The corner of the house was overgrown with a Virginian creeper. It was not late enough in the autumn for it to have attained its full glory of bronze and gold, so it now only wore a modest mantle of green; and some late autumnal roses showed their cream-

coloured petals against it. Between the two gardens ran a low quickset hedge, barely three feet high ; on Mr. Cundleigh's side, one blaze of scarlet and yellow nasturtiums, through which the long unpruned shoots of the hawthorn forced their way. On Mrs. Payne's side this hedge was trim and smooth almost as a lawn : at the lower end there was an opening where the bushes had refused to grow, and which Mrs. Payne's dog had enlarged till by degrees it had grown wide enough to allow Mr. Ross to step through. It was a difficult thing for him to do ; he had now been a month under Mrs. Payne's care, and movement was painful and wearying still. And Mrs. Payne did not choose to be on such terms with Mr. Cundleigh as to allow of his coming into her garden to assist her lodger into his, so " Mr. Ross " had to walk as best he might to the opening in the hedge, where

Mr. Cundleigh met him, and then supported him to the harbour.

Mrs. Payne did not approve of the harbour any more than she did of anything else belonging to her neighbour. It was damp and full of caterpillars and earwigs she averred—indeed, all Mr. Cundleigh's garden swarmed with them, in her opinion, as any garden would that was allowed to degenerate into such a wilderness. She recognized her neighbour and his daughter when she met them, as a good Churchwoman might a Dissenter, loftily, distantly, with just the pitying wonder that they should choose to go so far astray as they had done that might be expected from the widow of a clergyman of the Established Church. She was quite as poor as they were, but she wore her poverty with a difference, visiting amongst the élite of St. Ewald's, while with the exception of the two or three families

of tolerable position, who belonged to his congregation, Mr. Cundleigh was ignored by the local society altogether. She disapproved steadily and consistently of Mr. Cundleigh's "views" as being even more pernicious and subversive of the established order of things than Dissent was in general, and it had been a great trouble to her when her lodger and the minister became acquainted. She had lectured Mr. Ross mildly on the subject, and he had heard her lectures with the unswerving politeness, the sweet, patient courtesy which he manifested on every occasion. She had lent him one of her husband's sermons, the *one* which he had had printed by general desire of his congregation upon the sin of schism, and he had tried his best to read it through—and got nearly half-way—and returned it to her with a great deal more praise than he ought honestly to have given ; but not the

less he borrowed Mr. Cundleigh's papers and books, and leant on the arm which if twenty years older than his own, was still by far the stronger, and sat in his arbour at the risk of being stung by the gnats, or bitten by all the nameless horrors which Mrs. Payne's imagination conjured up as the denizens of its leafy shades.

He cared very little for Mr. Cundleigh's heresy ; very little for the fact that he was shut out from the circle of St. Ewald's gentility. He had been so long away from England that he was oblivious of the thousand worlds into which, socially or religiously, its population is divided. It mattered infinitely little to him that the old grey-headed man who had taken every opportunity he could to show him, a stranger, ill and lonely, every little kindness in his power, was excluded from the tea-tables of St. Ewald's, and preached to a tiny con-

gregation composed principally of the small tradespeople and mechanics of the town. He was very glad of some companionship more intellectual than Mrs. Payne's, and of a nature as well as an arm stronger than his own to lean upon. He was weak in more ways than one—had not his weakness been the ruin of his life?—and this old man was still so strong and self-sufficing, though every winter's cough shook his frame and threatened to end his days. He had *lived* his life; Hartley Rosslyn felt sadly that he had rusted his away—well for him if the rust and the canker could have affected himself alone.

Gordon Cundleigh had been a busy man in his day. The four-and-twenty years that Hartley Rosslyn had spent in his dreary exile had seen many changes in England, and he was not a man to stand aloof looking on at the fray and doing nothing to

help either one side or the other. He had spent his best years in the great manufacturing capitals of England, taking as keen a part as any in the movements going on, till at last, his health failing, he was glad to accept a smaller sphere of action, and end his days in the comparative rest offered him at St. Ewald's.

Grace Rosslyn liked the old minister almost as well as she did her father, and he understood her a great deal better than her father did. He saw all the promise and the incipient strength, the energy, the creative force underlying the girl's careless, listless moods. John Rosslyn thought that his girl would grow into a shrewd woman and a good housewife: Gordon Cundleigh thought that it was quite possible she might be all this, but was also certain she would be a great deal more.

He had helped to fight some tough bat-

bles in his day. He liked to fight them over again in this girl's hearing ; to see the grey eyes brighten, the rounded cheek flush, the slight form dilate as he told of fields fought on the hustings, the platform, and in the workshop. He had laboured in a good many places besides the pulpit ; for which he had had no small blame in his time, even from his own people. Gordon Cundleigh had always his answer ready : " Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might," and he had found a very great deal to do in his time, besides just preaching and praying. Well, that was all over now ; he had fought his last fight, gained his last victory, and now there was nothing for him on this side the grave but the stillness and the rest of his ministry at St. Ewald's. He was quite content, nay, thankful, that it should be so, but still, like an old race-horse waking to some semblance

of its earlier vigour when it sees a younger compeer starting for the field, Gordon Cundleigh's former self woke up at the sight of Grace's fresh, eager yearning for the life that was opening before her.

It was almost a pity she was not a man, he sometimes thought ; but he rated women quite highly enough to think that Grace might be of some use in the world, though neither bar, senate, nor pulpit was likely to be the richer for her eloquence. There was plenty for women to do if men would only set them in the way to do it—at any rate, it should not be his fault if, when Grace Rosslyn found words to speak of the soul within her, she had not something else to tell of than love-sick dreams or moon-struck fancies.

A woman, tender, gentle, loving, and with the ties of a wife and mother had done so much for Italy in the very crisis

of its political life, in all the throes and agonies of its new birth into freedom ; might not there be one here who could do as much for the English masses, the untaught, illiterate herd, slowly wakening to some consciousness that, after all, they were a little better than the brutes, a little more than mere machines ? For fifty years, with heart and soul, with tongue and purse, Gordon Cundleigh had laboured for them, and now in his rest time it seemed as if to train this girl to follow up his work after another fashion would be a worthy finish of his life.

The little arbour boasted two chairs and a table. On the table lay a map of Italy, and Mr. Cundleigh with the point of his silver pencil-case was showing his guest the route Garibaldi had just taken. They were both so interested in the matter that Grace had full time to look upon Hartley Rosslyn

and decide whether he was a likely person to be disabled by the gout before either the minister or he perceived her. What struck her most was the contrast between the two faces. Gordon Cundleigh's was large and massive: the thick, white eyebrows hanging over the great, keen, grey eyes, the broad forehead, over which silver hair clustered as thickly now as it had done when a deep brown, the set, firm, wide mouth, the prominent chin, were so totally opposed to the thin aquiline features, the worn, weary look, and the pale, delicate complexion of the man by his side. There was a difference even in the character of the hair. Gordon Cundleigh's, though white, was still as profuse and strong in its growth as it had been forty years ago; his visitor's chesnut locks were only flecked with grey, but they were thin and poor—the hair of a man constitutionally delicate, and this deli-

cacy, indeed, it was which struck her most—it showed itself in the thin white hands, the stooping frame, every line and feature of the face, and she was too young to understand the moral as well as physical weakness it indicated.

Gordon Cundleigh looked up presently, and caught sight of Grace's face. His own brightened up as it always did when she was near. "Here comes a young lady who will take as much interest in the route of the Red Shirts as ourselves," he said. "Let me introduce Miss Rosslyn to you."

Something in the first glimpse of her face had struck Hartley Rosslyn as familiar. That dormant family likeness which in those near akin, however apparently dissimilar features and complexions may be, is so often detected by stranger's eyes, was now recognised by his. "John's girl," the "child" of whom he had spoken with an

inflection of tenderness in the same breath with which he had told his brother that for her sake they could be kin no more. He looked curiously at her—it was a bright, good face ; bright, clever, eager, hopeful, but yet a face which would never rival Letitia Lisdale's. Eager, impetuous, restless—he felt sure that the man who could trust his soul to the keeping of the one would be the last who could do so to the other.

Grace made a third in the arbour, entering as keenly as did Mr. Cundleigh into the progress of the Garibaldians. Thanks to him, she knew a great deal more about their movements and their purposes than did Hartley Rosslyn, to whom life, for the last four-and-twenty years, had stood so still that sometimes when Gordon Cundleigh warmed up as he spoke of the men he had known and the things they had

done, it seemed to the other as if all this time he had been sleeping in the little quiet German towns as deep a slumber as Rip van Winkle or the sleepers in the cave had ever known.

He was puzzled, too, by Grace's eagerness and interest. The girls he had known in his youth had not been given to trouble themselves about such matters, still less the placid Fräuleins with whom he had occasionally associated in Donnerstadt. Letty Lisdale had slipped into his heart at once, won it, kept it, and made him feel that he could wish no better wife for his son; but he could hardly tell as yet whether he liked Grace or not. Her laugh was very musical, but it was too loud; she seemed clever, bright, but was she not just a little odd? Had she been well trained? Was his brother, after all, just the man fitted to have charge of a young girl? and then

her dress—what was there in it that by its very contrast reminded him of the charm of tone, and colour, and fitness that pervaded Letitia Lisdale's, and were missing here ?

He was asking himself this when Anne Cundleigh came, with a little amusement in her plain, sensible face, to inform him that Mrs. Payne had sent in word that Miss Lisdale had called to see him, and was awaiting him at her house. Would he go back and see her ? But to go back was a difficult matter, involving much exertion both on his own part and Mr. Cundleigh's. To make the passage through the gap in the hedge and back once in a day was all that either of them was equal to, so that to go back would involve the surrender of the remainder of the morning which he had hoped to spend in the arbour, while Miss Lisdale, having been to see him the preceding day,

might possibly leave at the end of a quarter of an hour. If she could only come there—why couldn't Anne Cundleigh have suggested that to the messenger? which was a thing Anne Cundleigh knew Mrs. Payne much too well to venture upon doing.

But Miss Lisdale herself had solved the difficulty by walking from one cottage to the other when she heard where Mr. Ross was, and now she stood uttering some simple apology to Anne Cundleigh, and holding out the last number of the *Illustrated News*, which she had brought with her to Mr. Ross.

"I knew it would be such an effort for you to come back," she said, "that I felt tempted to leave the paper next door, but I thought that Mrs. Horton would not feel satisfied with a second hand report of your progress, and so I ventured here."

She was looking very charming this

morning ; her hair and her dress were so simply yet so carefully arranged that they had the effect of making poor Grace's appear more neglected than ever. Even Gordon Cundleigh, though as little influenced by externals as any man living, felt the charm of her presence, and, pushing away his map, forgot all about Garibaldi for the time, and began expatiating on his flowers to his young visitor. The little maid brought out another chair from the house, and Anne Cundleigh found a few minutes to spare from her domestic duties, and so Letty—much to the horror of Mrs. Payne, who was on the other side of the hedge—was soon the centre of an admiring group, Grace Rosslyn admiring her most of all.

There was not an atom of jealousy or meanness in the composition of this girl. She was quite ready to own that Miss Lisdale was more graceful and better dressed

than herself ; she felt the charm and refinement of her manner as much as Hartley Rosslyn could do, and gave up her heart as readily as he had done his, feeling ready, before she had been with her twenty minutes, to swear friendship for life.

And Letty, on her side, was drawn to Grace. This must be the "little cousin" of whom Charles Rosslyn had spoken to her as a "good little unformed thing," whom he wished she knew. She would know her, if possible ; she would be very nice and sweet now they were brought together, and, her heart warming as she looked upon her, she would do her very best to get her to wear her hair after a more civilized fashion, and put on her dresses a little more as other people did. She felt that she could be very fond of this little cousin after an elder sister fondness, and improve her, and pet and develope her,

if she would only give her the opportunity of doing so.

Hartley Rosslyn looked curiously at the two girls, each of whom seemed interwoven in the scheme of his son's life, and, looking on them, he wondered if fate would never throw his son in his path. He had heard of him so often, for, thanks to Grace, Charles had become intimately acquainted with Mr. Cundleigh and his daughter; even Mrs. Payne had spoken to him on the subject, and expressed her deep regret and pity that a clergyman of the Established Church should so far forget himself as to visit at the house of a mere preacher in a conventicle. Mrs. Payne had a very vague idea of what a conventicle really was, but it was a long word, and sounded well, and she was very fond of using it when speaking of her neighbour; she half excused Mr. Charles Rosslyn, on the plea of his youth, and his

oddness, and her hearer had troubled himself not a little to know in what his “oddness” consisted.

Was it only another name for weakness—for the wretched, miserable feebleness of purpose, the woefully impressionable nature, that had been the bane of his own life? Was this the birthright which his son had derived from him? and would it lead him to be the wreck that he had become himself? He would have liked to ask Mr. Cundleigh about him, but he felt as if the mere utterance of his name would betray his secret—he could not bring himself to speak it like any other word; he felt as if some inflection of the tones, some tremor of the voice must reveal that Charles Rosslyn’s was no stranger’s name to him.

There were some books which his son had lent the minister, and in one of them

his name was written, clear, broad, and plain, a bold, firm hand enough. Hartley Rosslyn had borrowed this volume, and would sit for hours looking at the autograph on the fly-leaf, trying to draw therefrom some index to his son's character. For the book itself he cared little; it was a scientific treatise upon a subject in which both Mr. Cundleigh and Charles Rosslyn were interested, and Hartley Rosslyn's mind was too purely feminine for him to feel much interested in such a topic. But he was glad, too, that his son's tastes took this direction. It was infinitely better than that they should too closely have followed his own.

Presently he heard his son's name. He seemed always listening for it now, just as a woman might for that of her lover.

"How long can you stay with us,

Gracie?" said Mr. Cundleigh, "and how will you get home?"

"Till to-night. I have come for a long day, and I wrote to Cousin Charles to come and fetch me," she said.

There was no blush or tremor. Cousin Charles was hers. She had appropriated him with the careless security of a child, who never thinks another may dispute its treasure. Then she looked up: "He is here! he is coming already!" And there was a firm step on the gravel path, which Hartley Rosslyn felt was that of his son—the grown man whom he had not seen since he was a babe.

He was afraid to look up. He heard Grace's eager questioning as to the reason of his appearance, and then a voice—clear, mellow, with a joyous undertone pervading it—greeting Mr. Cundleigh and his daughter, and then Miss Rosslyn. He was

conscious, too, that the minister was going through the formality of introduction between himself and his son, with the old-fashioned formality he always assumed on such occasions, and he bent his own head, and yet was afraid to look up. Afraid lest he should give way, and fling himself, like the patriarch of old, upon his long lost son, and so, with tears and embraces, reveal the secret of their relationship. He kept still with half-closed eyes for a little while, and heard Charles Rosslyn say :

“Why did I come so soon? Gracie, the same post that brought me your mandate requiring me to fetch you from here to-night, conveyed another missive from your father, asking me to dine and spend the afternoon with him. I suppose he was not aware of your arrangements. By good fortune it is a whole holiday instead of a half one, so that gave me time to look in

here, and tell you I may possibly be later than the hour at which you desired my presence. Also to bring Mr. Cundleigh the day's *Times*—there's news from Italy in it, sir. Your favourite is carrying all before him, and we may have him as our guest before long. Gracie, wouldn't you like to assist in his ovation?"

"Like!" she said, with flashing eyes. "I'd walk barefoot to see him. Anne, I was thinking of him all the time you were playing the organ this morning, thinking of him, and wishing that to your music I could set some hymn of praise in his honour. Please, Mr. Cundleigh, read all about it; Charles, if you've read it once, never mind, good news will bear the telling twice."

Charles Rosslyn turned to Miss Lisdale.

"Are you interested enough in Gari-

baldi's movements to care to hear two columns of the *Times*?"

His father caught the altered softened tone in which he spoke, with an underlying tenderness in his voice which it had not known when he addressed his cousin. Then he looked up from under his long-lashes and saw a face handsome, manly, frank, and winning, and with a look in it, now it was turned upon Letitia Lisdale, that brought up another face which had been pillowed on his shoulder many years ago. His mother's eyes, and just now, something of his mother's face. Hartley Rosslyn had been thought to do a foolish thing when he had married that mother; his brother dated the first step to his ruin from it, but he had never regretted it himself. She had been a simple untaught girl, with a sweet loving nature, that perhaps might have been easily led to wrong and

shame, if he had chosen so to lead her. But the possibility of thus wronging her had never once occurred to him; no crowned queen could have called forth a love more loyal and chivalrous than had this small farmer's orphan daughter, whom he had married, because it was the only way by which he could save her from a harsh taskmistress. His one year of married life had been the loveliest little idyll possible—all the lovelier and sweeter for the secrecy with which he was forced to enshroud it. He had made his wife his pupil, and she was a wonderfully apt and docile one. He had likened himself to the sculptor of old, whose love had given his creation life, as he saw this fond young soul opening and awaking beneath his teaching. Then there came the end—he had taught her to live for him, and she could not live without him; she quietly

passed away when he left her—not even her child's little fingers being strong enough to keep her here.

She had always been a slight, delicate girl (it was his pity for her that had first made Hartley Rosslyn think of love); still, happiness is a wonderful lengthener of days, and hers might not have been run out yet, had it not been for the sudden wrench and heart-break.

And it was Mary's child who now stood before him—apparently all that a mother could wish—brave, hopeful, handsome, looking down upon the woman he loved, and who, his father had instinctively guessed, loved him. Well, those years abroad had been very weary ones, and his return to England had been full of bitterness, but yet to see his son like this seemed to overpay it all.

He kept very quiet, only his white thin

hands were clasped together, and he hoped no one would speak to him ; he should surely break down if they did, and then he leaned back in his seat, and closed his eyes, hoping that every one would think him too tired to talk.

Then he heard his son again addressing Letty : “ Are you interested in Italian politics ? Gracie and Mr. Cundleigh here are sworn partizans of Garibaldi.”

“ I like *him*,” said Letty, decidedly, “ and I believe in his cause, because I believe in him ; but I’m afraid I couldn’t tell you very much of its merits apart from those of its leader.”

Then Mr. Cundleigh began to read. He had had a magnificent voice in his time, which had been heard in other places than the pulpit, and Grace, forgetting even Charles Rosslyn for the time, listened with heart and ears. Letty looked on her with

a little vexation. She would have done a great deal for Garibaldi and his red shirts. She would have sat up night after night to tear lint for their wounds ; she would have stinted herself in dresses and even gloves to have sent them money ; she would have, and had, given them her warmest sympathies and devoutest prayers, but she would *not* have sat with her hair pushed back from her ears as if afraid to lose a word, her chin resting on her hands, and her hands upon her knees, while the narrative of their exploits and progress was being read aloud. No amount of enthusiasm could have made her, for one moment, act or look in an ungraceful or unladylike manner, and she could hardly understand the enthusiasm which could make another so careless of her attitudes.

Grace drew a long breath when Mr. Cundleigh had finished.

“ *Vive Garibaldi !* ” she said. “ I’d give a year of my life to see him if he comes over here.”

“ He’s worth the seeing, Gracie, though three hundred and sixty-five of your bright days is a long price to pay for anything,” said Mr. Cundleigh.

“ Not too much for *that*,” said Grace, “ seeing they are only a woman’s days after all. I should live more in the moment that I looked upon him than I do in any twelve months that I vegetate here. Like Beatrice I say ‘ Oh, that I were a man ! ’ ”

Anne Cundleigh worked on. She had brought out a stocking to mend. She understood if she did not share Grace’s flights and vagaries, and she never ridiculed them ; but Letty was a little puzzled by a girl so unlike any with whom her conventional life had brought her into contact.

“What makes you wish that?” she said softly. “I think a woman’s life is by far the best. It is so secure and still.”

“But I hate the stillness, and I don’t care for the security,” said Grace. “I should like rest well enough if I had earned it, as Mr. Cundleigh here has done. But I don’t want my life to be all rest, which, being only a woman, I suppose it must necessarily be.”

“Women can play their part too in the world,” said the old minister. “Gracie, my child, there will be work given you to do when you are fit for it.”

“Never such work as yours,” she said impetuously.

“Heaven forbid, my dear. Mine has been so entirely a man’s part that I should hardly care to see you copy it. But, Gracie, if you can’t speak to men by ten thousand at a time as I have done, you must reach

them in another way, when God thinks fit to give you utterance."

"Yes, that is well enough," said Grace, thoughtfully. "There is some power that women can share with men, but after all there can never be for them the supreme delight of realizing their power—unless indeed upon the stage, where, after all, and at the best, they only embody another's ideas. But I have spoken of *seeing* Garibaldi. Only fancy to *be* such a one, to look around on the heaving swaying crowd—thousand upon thousand of eager upturned faces below; windows, balconies filled with them—breathless, eager—looking up to one man to whom they have of themselves given a power so infinitely greater than any king could ever wield! Say it is only for an hour—even for *that* hour to live and rule in all those hearts would be worth how infinitely more than the tame dragging on of the commonplace exist-

ence that is the lot of so many men and of almost every woman.

She was flushed and excited, and Mr. Cundleigh had caught something of her enthusiasm. Anne Cundleigh looked at him with a little anxiety. It was not always well for him to be borne away by Grace's fervour; when the reaction came he was sure to suffer. Letty looked on Grace more curiously than ever.

"She is a clever girl: there is more in her than I thought for—but she is odd—it is the living so much alone. I wish Charles—Mr. Rosslyn—would bring her to me; I should like to try and make her more like other girls." Which quiet Anne Cundleigh could have told her would be simply impossible.

Grace went on, Anne's warning look disregarded:

"Mr. Cundleigh, haven't you felt some-

thing like this yourself? You have had a long life. Haven't you had moments in it which have outweighed many years? Haven't you something else to look back upon than the everlasting round of dinner, tea, and supper, which to so many good folks forms the be-all and end-all of life? Haven't you done some work in your time which makes this rest seem your rightful due, instead of only a feebler continuance of seventy years of vegetation?"

"Child—you hardly yet know what life is," said Gordon Cundleigh. "The meanest and humblest can hardly be said to vegetate while sin and grief are in the world. If nothing else, sorrow alone would keep us from stagnation, and death ennobles life; we are all likely to be spectators, and sooner or later must be actors, in a tragedy so solemn as to redeem the most commonplace existence from vulgarity."

"Yes," persisted Grace, "but when death comes to you will he not be all the more welcome for the thought that you have fully lived,—will not those supreme moments of your life make themselves remembered even then?"

"Well, yes, child. I've played my part in my day, though Anne, here, might not have to mend so patiently if I had had a little more worldly wisdom. Sometimes I think I've meddled with matters that were hardly in my way. I don't know, I couldn't stand still and let them go by me. I've been laughed at as a political parson, but how could any man, unless he had milk and water in his veins instead of blood, content himself with giving out hymns and texts when men wanted a few plain words just to tell them that if they didn't mind they would lose their birthright without even gaining the mess of pottage? And yet I've

prayed too—I think to some purpose. Just to think of it, Grace—eighty thousand men with hats off and heads bent at my uplifted hands, and now I muster a congregation of barely seventy souls!”

He had forgotten all but Grace while speaking. If he had looked he would have seen that Miss Lisdale was carried for the moment out of herself that his enthusiasm had affected even her. This old man was so different from the sleek, decorous rectors, or the trim young curates with whom she had come in contact. He was odd, eccentric, strange, but she was too infected by his earnestness to think of that now. He was a brave man, who had led a life to some purpose—that was what her eyes said as she looked on him; and Charles Rosslyn, reading their meaning, wondered what she would think of all his careless, easy years.

He had never cared to ask himself whether Grace despised him for his listless, purposeless existence, even while she was most urging him to alter it, but he did ask himself now what the girl before him, with her eyes kindling at the old man's warmth, would think of it.

"Eighty thousand men!" said Gordon Cundleigh. Anne went on with her mending. The worst had come now, and it was too late to caution Grace or attempt to check her father. There would be a day's utter prostration to-morrow—there always was when the old man had been carried beyond himself by his reminiscences—possibly an attack of neuralgia. Well, she must only be thankful that there was time for him to rest before Sunday.

"I remember it all as if it were yesterday," he continued; "I was minister at B—— when the whole country throughout

was in a stir at the anticipated change of ministry and its influence on the Reform Bill—the great measure of the day. We were all heart and soul for it at B——, and some of the townspeople had started a Reform League, which gave the Government great offence. The Duke talked of sending his Dragoons to scour our streets if it were not put down, upon which I and five hundred other gentlemen of the town went and joined it at once by way of answer to him. It was an awful time—at any moment an outbreak might arise, and if once began, who should say when and where it would stop? Men were in greater earnest than Government ever dreamed of. We were waiting day by day to hear if the House of Lords would be allowed to stand in the way of what the people were so bent upon having, and if it did, there was no knowing what price they might have to

pay before they got the Bill passed. They meant to have it, child, and at last news came that Earl Grey had been placed at the helm again. The reporters were down as soon as the news—even more than London, B—— was just then the political heart and pulse of the empire. We gathered together outside the town—above eighty thousand of us—to tell each other and the world at large how we felt on hearing that the right man had been placed at the helm, and that we were to have that given us quietly which, perhaps, if it had been withheld, some of us might have been inclined to take—not so quietly. Eighty thousand—of all grades and classes, but busy men, every one of them, who had left their shops, and their desks, and their forges, to meet together at this great crisis. I had not been long at B——, but I knew several of the leading men there, and I said

to some of them, 'Don't you think before we begin we ought to return thanks to Almighty God for having preserved us from what might else have been something very near a revolution?' They asked me to do it. As I told them, they had the Catholic priest there who had lived with them thirty years, and the rector of St. Luke's, who had been with them five-and-twenty. We were all content just then to work side by side upon earth, let us differ as much as we might about the best road to heaven. But they would have *me*; they were pleased to say that they could trust me; and, child, at such a time, to speak to eighty thousand men at a moment's notice was a different matter to getting up in my pulpit at B——, with my sermon under my arm, and my congregation of a few hundreds, more or less, expecting me. I felt a little unnerved at first; I was a younger man

than many there, and comparatively a stranger to them. But I collected my thoughts, and I said, 'With the Lord's help I will do what is asked of me.'

"There had been a platform made on the moment, of a few trestles and boards, for the reporters. Father Maurice, the Catholic priest, said I had better mount on that, I could not be seen so well where I was, and the other gentlemen around me thought so too. Well, child, I stepped on it, and in doing so lost the thread of my prayer; it had gone from me in a moment, and all those eighty thousand faces upturned toward me. But I never faltered for a second, and I said to myself, 'I stand here to give the Lord thanks for a great deliverance, and He will help me to do it.' So He did. I lifted up my hands, and in a moment every man in all that mighty crowd saw to Whom I was about to speak, and in

a second every hat was off, every whisper hushed, every head bent in reverence, and all that surging mass stood still, as I said, 'Let us give thanks to God.'

"I never seemed to want a word—they came to my lips unsought; they told me afterwards not a man in all that crowd but heard my voice as I thanked the Lord for having saved us from civil war, and strife, and bloodshed, and found for us a peaceful way by which to establish our rights and secure our liberties; but when it was over I almost gave way, and they had to come and lift me half fainting from the platform. But oh, child! to look upon that scene and this, makes me feel as if I had almost done with life when I have fallen upon days so different."

"Yes, the days are different," said Grace, "but you played your part well in those that went before; and now, if the quiet

ones have come, you have a right to the rest which you have earned."

And upon the two men by Gordon Cundleigh's side—one who had lost his life, the other who could hardly be said to have begun it—the girl's words fell like a reproach. When should they have earned their rest? The quiet days had come to one, and their enforced stillness was eating into his very soul; the other had hardly, until now, thought for what his days were given, or that there was any other purpose in his life, than to let it drift away almost as unmarked and unnoted as had done any of the monks who had lived before him in the shadow of the walls of St. Ewald's abbey.

But if Grace could only have known that when her passionate words of anger at his idleness sounded keenest in his ears, it was only to make him feel that he must live to higher aims and better purpose before he

could win a love that was not hers, and yet was the only love he cared to win ! She was doing her best to send her soldier to the fight, but if he won the victory he would never look to her for its meed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HEDGE.

MRS. PAYNE was walking up and down her garden, looking every now and then, with a little vexed impatience, across the hedge that divided it from her neighbour's. Only furtively, however ; not for the world would she have been seen so looking—it would have seemed as if she were evincing an undignified curiosity in her neighbour's movements ! But it was past the hour of Mr. Ross's dinner ; she had superintended the bread-crumbing of his sweetbreads herself, and at an earlier hour of the morn-

ing made his pudding with her own hands, and it was vexing to have his dinner spoiled because he chose to sit so unusually long in a place where he ought never to have set his foot. She might have sent her little maid in to tell him that dinner was ready, but that would have been recognizing the fact of Mr. Cundleigh's existence, a fact which Mrs. Payne on principle chose to ignore as much as possible. She would not know her neighbours—her dog might—how he could eat the bones from the table of the preacher at a conventicle was a puzzle to Mrs. Payne—and Mr. Ross might persist in walking through the gap that Fido had made, but she would abet neither him nor the dog in such doings, by showing them the slightest countenance when they were once on the other side of the hedge. She was a thin, small woman, always the very picture of neatness in her

dress, with a face that had once been pretty, but was now disfigured by erysipelas, and which in every excitement grew redder than ever, and was now fast growing very red indeed.

How long she might have waited, struggling between her sense of what was due to Mr. Ross's dinner, and what to her own dignity, it is difficult to say, had not a movement on Charles Rosslyn's part hurried matters. If he had sat there till midnight his father would have been content to have sat there too. But he rose.

"I am due at the Grange, Miss Cundleigh, at two o'clock, and must take my leave now. Gracie, I shall be back in good time to fetch you."

He shook hands with them all but with Mr. Cundleigh's strange guest, whom he had never seen before, and with whom that morning he had not interchanged a word,

but the other rose, and leaning with one feeble hand upon the little table in the arbour, held out the other to him. He had been waiting for this, almost wishing that his son might go, that he might feel his hand-clasp, and when he *did* feel it—felt the warm young fingers holding his own feeble ones—he hardly knew how to bear himself composedly. Anne Cundleigh saw his emotion, and gave it a prosaic interpretation.

“It is past his dinner hour,” she said; “Mr. Ross, you are faint and weak, and we have been to blame in keeping you here so long.”

Then she looked anxiously at her father. His momentary excitement had passed away, but he was in no fit state to be a very efficient support to Mr. Ross. Letty saw her difficulty, and solved it.

“Mr. Rosslyn, will you take Mr. Ross

into Mrs. Payne's? Mr. Cundleigh seems too tired."

How Hartley Rosslyn blessed her! He was not only to take his son's hand, but to lean on his arm, and if Charles Rosslyn had known of their relationship he could hardly have supported him more tenderly and carefully. The instinctive kindness of his nature would have made him do so, even had the task not been laid upon him by the woman that he loved. And it was a task that required care and caution, for this morning Hartley Rosslyn's steps were very feeble, and his eyes dimmed. He leaned very heavily upon his son's arm, and Charles looked pityingly upon his feebleness. How was he to know that he leaned all the heavier because only so he dared, after some sort, embrace him?

Down the narrow path they went, through the gap Fido had made in the

hedge, and so into Mrs. Payne's back garden, Hartley Rosslyn feeling as if all the world were bounded by that narrow space, and with a ringing in his ears as if unseen angels were singing his *Nunc Dimittis*. Then he felt himself placed in his easy chair by the window, and heard a young, kindly voice saying "Good morning," and knew nothing more till he opened his eyes and saw Mrs. Payne standing over him with a smelling-bottle in her hand, and a look of mingled anxiety and anger on her face.

"The sweetbreads are spoiled, Mr. Ross," she said, severely, "and you've fainted. It all comes of having anything to do with the people on the other side of the hedge, and stopping there so long past your dinner-time."

CHAPTER V.

MR. CHARLES ROSSLYN REJECTS HIS GOOD FORTUNE.

CHARLES ROSSLYN walked past the hedges, now bright with their autumn bravery of changeful leaves and glowing berries, with an eye that for once was careless of their beauty or of that of the autumn landscape stretching far away on either side of the quiet country road. He was glad to have torn himself away even from Letty's presence, because just then he would rather think of than be with her. Grace's words were acting on him like so

many goads. She had not meant to taunt him when she had spoken of careless days, of rest fairly earned, of life *lived* not wasted, but his love for another woman had served to point the words of this one. What good was his life unto him ? What was he doing with his days ? His work in itself might have been noble enough if he had taken to it in the right spirit, or even if he had been allowed to carry out some half-formed theories which at the commencement of his career he had amused himself by forming respecting it. But he was shackled and bound by the old traditions of the school, and still more by the routine and formulas by which Dr. Langton chose to abide. He had fallen in with these pretty well, simply because he did not care enough about his work to rebel against them ; he had been content to take matters easily, both as regarded his pupils

and himself, and now he was asking himself what was the good of it all to either, and what was the outcome of it likely to be as regarded himself.

There was no question but that a man with half his brains could do the Doctor's work quite as well, and that a man with a little more energy than himself could do it infinitely better, simply because such an one would refuse to be bound by rules and restrictions to which he had yielded too easily. But let him do the work as well as he might, how was he likely to be the better for it as regarded Letitia Lisdale ? He could hardly ask her to marry him on his present stipend, and when was there likely to be an opening to better things if he stayed where he was ? And what opening if he did not ? He would have liked the bar, but he had not money enough to maintain himself for a couple of terms. Even if he

had been better fitted than he was for a clerical career, he had no prospect of a living, and his present post brought him in as much as an ordinary curacy, and even if he did not do the work as well as such work should be done, still it was infinitely more congenial to him than the ministry. But he might do worse with his days than idle them away ; worse with his life than spend it in sheer wastefulness. He was no coxcomb—he had plenty of faults, but of that at least let us acquit him ; but he was beginning to feel that it was quite possible Letitia Lisdale might come in time to care for him after the manner that he cared for her.

It was impossible to repress the thrill of rapture which this thought gave him, but precious as her love might have been under other circumstances, it was a thing, he told himself, which he had no right to wish for

now. If she had been poor, he might perhaps have contemplated the possibility of a long engagement, but she had just that unlucky little fortune, which report of course had magnified, and he could not consent to be maintained by his wife; and if he stayed much longer near Letty, he was afraid that sooner or later he might put himself in a position to be so maintained. To be near her very much, without saying words that, situated as he was, should be left unsaid, he was beginning to feel impossible; to live in St. Ewald's and not go near her, would be, he felt, equally impossible, and therefore the best thing for him would be flight before he had lost his honour, or Letitia her freedom.

But it would be very difficult for him to leave before Christmas without violating his engagements to the Doctor, and he wanted a little time to look about him, and

see where he should find another sphere of action. So for nearly three months he must remain in the neighbourhood; he could not help feeling thankful for this in his inmost heart, though he tried hard to persuade himself that it was only an imperative necessity in which he reluctantly acquiesced.

So thinking, he walked slowly on at a pace altogether different from the buoyant careless step usual to him, but at last, slow as was his pace, it brought him to that point in the high road from which the narrow carriage way wound through the fields to the front of Rosslyn Grange. Then he looked up at it with more of an envious regret than he had ever felt in all his life before. It had gone from him—his birthright, which had been lost almost before he was born, and never, until now, had it seemed to him as if he had sus-

tained a wrong by its loss. But he felt something like this now, as he looked upon the brave old house with its spreading fields around, and the autumn flowers in its garden showing their brightest against the mellow tints of the walls.

“A fair home to bring a bride to,” he said to himself, with a little bitterness. “One might have forgiven her having a few thousands of her own if one could give her a jointure from some of those broad fields. I wonder what sort of man was my father, who played at ducks and drakes with such a property. Aunt Rosslyn always seemed as much inclined to speak of the evil one as of him. I suppose much such a ne’er-do-well as myself, only with a little more to play fast and loose with. Well, it’s not for me to be casting stones at him, though Grace, not I, will have the old Grange to bring a mate

home to. I hope the poor child will find a good one when her time comes."

Nurse Stokes came into the hall as he entered the house.

"You're late, Marster Charles, and the marster's put dinner off an hour for you. But I'll give them word to serve up now, and the marster won't be put out when he sees the goose on the table."

But John Rosslyn seemed to day as if nothing should make him "put out." He looked at his watch, it is true, but made no other comment on his nephew's want of punctuality, and the dinner was of a more elaborate description than usual, as if to do him honour. When the cloth was removed—John Rosslyn, you may be sure, liked to see his fruit on his mahogany, along with the old-fashioned decanters, with the full-bodied port and brandied sherry, in which he believed as the perfec-

tion of after-dinner wines—he filled his glass, told his guest to do the same, and then rising, first closed the door, and next proceeding to the great bow-window which opened on the lawn, looked out, as if to make sure that none of the servants or labourers were near, and then shut that.

“It’s best to make sure,” he said ; “one doesn’t want one’s words carried on the winds like so much thistle-down.”

Then he sat down, held his glass up to the light, trying to look, and really believing in his heart that he was, a fair judge of wine, and believing too that the compounds on his table deserved that name, and having slowly emptied his glass, refilled it, and helped himself to nuts.

It was not often that he indulged in dessert after dinner ; it would have infringed too much upon his out-door avocations ; but he had evidently made up his

mind to do so to-day, while the pipe in which he usually indulged for a short time was dispensed with for once. Charles Rosslyn, to whom his uncle's wines were abominations, sipped at his reluctantly, and looked out of the window at the red and yellow beds upon the lawn, and the dahlias and hollyhocks which brightened the borders, and wished himself back in the old minister's arbour. Then he looked at the hideous old china ornaments on the mantel-piece, the peacock feathers which flanked the Sacrifice of Isaac, worked in tent-stitch by his grandmother, the two or three family caricatures, called by courtesy portraits, the spindle-legged horse-hair chairs, the thin-leaved pembroke table, black with age, by which he sat, and wondered how much it would cost to make the dining-room look more in accordance with modern notions, and how long it would be, when

Grace came into her kingdom and brought a husband to share it with her, before these changes would be made ; and then he was roused from his reverie by his uncle saying—

“ Mr. Laurence has had a third attack of paralysis.”

“ He won’t get over it this time,” he answered, and took up a peach and peeled it lazily. “ It’s to be hoped the next rector will at least be able to read the prayers audibly.”

“ The next presentation is for sale,” said John Rosslyn ; “ they want a good price, too—two thousand pounds.”

“ It’s not too much as such wares go—they’ll get it. The country’s pretty about here, the air good, capital hunting in the neighbourhood for the parson’s friends if not for the parson himself, and plenty of lords and ladies within easy distance to

make up the society. They'll get what they ask."

"I think they will," said John Rosslyn;
"I mean to give it."

"Rather an odd investment for you, sir, isn't it?" Then he thought, "I wonder if any young curate has been making up to Grace?"

"I thought the living would be a good thing for you," said John Rosslyn. "You are all I have left of my one brother, and if he was not much to be proud of, poor fellow, still kin counts, and blood's thicker than water. What do you say to it, Charley? I never thought you were quite the right stuff for a parson; still, you'll make us a better rector of Clayford than any we've had for the last forty years."

Rector of Clayford, with house, and glebe, and five hundred a-year! He could hardly realize the possibility of such un-

looked-for generosity on his uncle's part. And if he were not exactly of the stuff of which ordinary rectors and vicars are made ; if his heart had failed him in his London career because his work seemed too great for him to cope with, it would be a different matter here, with a rural population of a few hundred souls, and two or three better class families to be benefited by his ministrations. He thought he could fill the place well enough, and do his duty fairly, so that he need not scruple to avail himself of his uncle's kindness ; and then, putting all these conscientious considerations to flight, came the one ecstatic recollection that Letty might be his for the asking. With such a prospect before him, he could forgive the fact of her fortune, and proceed gallantly enough with his wooing.

“ The house won't want much doing to,”

said John Rosslyn ; “ you’ll only have to smarten it up a bit, and the garden’s in wonderful order. But Mr. Laurence always looked more after that than his parish—his cobnuts are the finest in the county—and the home paddock will keep one cow, which will be all you’ll want, and the long slope will give you enough hay for that and your horse. I take it, you’ll keep a ponyphaeton at the least.”

Of course he would, and Letty should drive it. He pictured himself sitting by her side being so driven. Also he saw the cow—the prettiest Alderney he could meet with—standing knee-deep amongst the buttercups, while he pointed out her good points to her mistress. The cow would involve a small dairy ; he thought he saw Letty presiding there, and moving from dairy to storeroom and kitchen, the prettiest household queen that ever ruled. It

was a homely, domestic picture that his uncle's words called up, but it was one that thrilled him with happiness ; perhaps all the sweeter for its very homeliness.

John Rosslyn went on—

“ You'll want a wife : I don't hold with single parsons, and I've seen this long time past how it was with Grace and you. She's a good girl, and if you take her the land keeps all in the family—and the name—else she might have done better in some ways. You won't mind my saying that, but she fancies you, and so I think it's best to do what'll make her happy, even if it doesn't make her so rich as she might be. And after all”—and there was a little softening of the voice—“ you're Hartley's boy.”

Was the old man jesting ? No, he sat there looking thoroughly in earnest, and evidently persuaded that he was acting in a manner likely to lead to the highest hap-

piness of the two young people whose union he contemplated. It was some horrible mistake of his.

And Grace, did she really care for him in the manner her father thought she did? God forbid that he should have that child's unhappiness to answer for! But it was not probable—her father had taken her careless liking for love, misunderstood her as he had him. No fear for Grace—if ever girl was heart-free it was that little cousin of his.

“Uncle, I thank you very much,” he began, “but there is some mistake on your part. Grace and I are very fond of one another, but not in the way you think for. Grace likes me very much, but I don't think she'd care to take me for a husband.”

“How can you tell till you've asked her?” said John Rosslyn, “and of course you haven't done that. You're not the fellow to go with hardly a pound in your

pocket courting a girl like Grace. If I'd thought you were, do you think I'd have gone setting matters straight as I have done?"

"You are right there, sir. If I had loved Grace as a man loves the woman he wishes to make his wife, I should hardly have said a word to her while she was so much the richer. But I must be plain with you, I do *not* so love her, and I should be doing her as cruel a wrong as any man can inflict upon a woman, if I were to marry her, not being able to give her such a full complete affection as she deserves. I thank you with all my heart for your intended kindness, but it would be a miserable return to it if I did not undeceive you. As regards Grace, there is no harm done. Of course she will never know of this conversation, and take my word for it, she would be very sorry to be required to look

upon me in any other light than as a cousin."

John Rosslyn turned ashy pale, and his under lip quivered. He emptied his glass and then set it down with such emphasis on the table, that the bottom cracked in half.

"So my girl's not good enough for you," he said gruffly. "I didn't think I should ever hear any fellow say no when I offered her to him—least of all that she should go begging to the son of——"

He checked himself, took another glass, filled and emptied it, then got up and looked out of the window, perhaps thinking that not only his girl but all he saw before him—the pleasant garden, the fields stretching out beyond, which it had cost him so many years of labour and self-denial to win back—had been offered in vain. He had stooped to buy a husband for his girl, and

either the purchase money had not been sufficient, or for no price at all could he obtain the mate he wished for her.

He was very angry, both with himself and his nephew. It was no gratification even to think the other a fool, which he did. Had he not offered that fool his daughter, and had not the fool refused to take her? But mingling with his anger were softer feelings of regret for Grace. He might have been mistaken in the feelings of his nephew, but he was sure he had not been in hers. She had seen no one but him. He blamed himself now for not having taken more pains than he had done to procure her more companionship; and the other, to whom he had offered her, had most likely been caught by some flaunting hussy behind a counter, or some fine lady without a penny to bless herself. There was a little satisfaction in that idea; a

little comfort in thinking how different his nephew's future was likely to be to what it would have been had he let him arrange it for him. But all this could not efface the bitterness of the slight that had been put upon "the child," the child for whom he had lived, and planned, and hoped, and who had not only been slighted, but who would have to bear the long waiting for a love that was never to be hers.

"He's not good enough for her," he thought savagely, but then it only made matters worse that his girl had had what he could not help feeling as an affront put upon her by one who was "not good enough."

Charles Rosslyn rose and came towards him.

"I think I had better go, sir. We'll forget, if you please, all that has been said to-day, even a word or two that just now

escaped you, and for which I think you will feel sorry when more yourself. Let my father have been what he may, and I am afraid he was not one for a son to feel very proud of, still as he *was* my father I'd rather not have him spoken of again in the tone you used just now. But we'll let that pass. I shall think of nothing when I leave this house but that you meant to do me a great kindness which it was my misfortune to be unable to receive. Won't you shake hands, sir, and believe me there's no harm done? Gracie deserves a far better fellow than I am, and you may rely upon it it won't be very long before he comes in her way."

He held out his hand, and his uncle took it stiffly and coldly, then he left the house, saying to himself :

"Good-bye to all my visions of house, and cow, and pony. What a fool's paradise

that poor old fellow let me into for just two minutes! But one would think he must be almost in his dotage to make such a mistake about Gracie and me."

And John Rosslyn looked with an angry bitterness after his nephew as he walked leisurely along the winding gravel path of the garden, and then through the fields beyond and so into the high road.

"There he goes! an idiot who's thrown the one chance of his life away. It was as much for his sake and his father's that I did it as for the child's, but if a man lets a good thing go by him, there's no cramming it down his throat. Gracie will have a dull time of it this winter; girls feel such things. I wish I could send her from home for a time, or throw some one else in her way."

Then he left the window and sat down and smoked his pipe, but he had no heart

to go into the fields all that long sunny afternoon, and Grace, for some days after, wondered why her father's rough kindness had something in it so much more tender and gentle than its wont.

CHAPTER VI.

GRACE'S VISIT INTO SOCIETY.

LETTY had a great deal to say to Mrs. Horton about Grace ; she had never seen such a girl in her life. Mrs. Horton, on her part, was as much interested.

“We must do something for her,” she said. “Mr. Rosslyn’s cousin ! and brought up in so strange a way, poor little motherless thing. I should like to have her here.”

She was just the kindest creature living, Mrs. Horton ; not full of philanthropic schemes or charities on a great scale—her intensely domestic nature alone would have

prevented her having any vivid sympathies with such—but the little acts of courtesy, the daily kindnesses, that are like so many flowers in our path, these are what she excelled in. She would never have been a Mrs. Chisholm or a Mrs. Fry. To say nothing else, her intellectual capacities were not large enough for her to venture to take so wide a scope; but, in her own small sphere, she was overflowing with graciousness. She moved in an atmosphere of small benevolences. Half the delight she took in her garden—and she was as fond of flowers, too, as any woman living—was from the pleasure she had in distributing its produce. The very pleasure she took in bringing people together with a view to matrimony, arose from her intense belief in the helplessness of men, and their need of some one to protect them. It was sheer good nature, every bit of it.

Now, hearing of Grace, all the motherly element in her overflowed as she thought of the untrained girl, left to her own impulses and desires, with no one but a father, absorbed in his land, to direct her.

“Miss Cundleigh might do something,” she said; “but then she is quite out of society.”

“And out of the Church,” said Letty, whose Cathedral town training made her feel, with all her gentle courtesy, disposed to look a little askance on such as Gordon Cundleigh.

“That doesn’t matter so much; I’ve known some very nice people that were Dissenters; but, living as they do, they can do nothing for her. I’ll certainly call, and ask her to croquet, the next garden party—or, stay, as she is so odd, wouldn’t it be kinder to have her first by herself?

we might train and polish her a little. Besides, she may be shy of many strangers. I'll try and find out from Mr. Rosslyn which she would like the best."

Mr. Rosslyn was decidedly of opinion that Grace would rather spend a day alone with Letty and Mrs. Horton, and he thanked the latter very warmly for her interest in his cousin.

"It would be so good of you to take a little notice of her," he said ; "she is a fine creature, running wild for want of a little judicious care."

He felt really grateful. In his way he was very fond of Grace—so fond, that if he had not seen Letty, he might easily have taken this warm, cousinly liking for love, or, at least, have thought that that was what it might grow into, and have done her the wrong of taking her along with Clayford rectory and glebe at her father's hands.

He should be very glad if she could be brought under the influence of two such women as Mrs. Horton, with her genial motherliness, and Letty, with her sweet, calm stateliness.

“They will make my poor little wild rose-bud into a garden flower between them,” he thought, not knowing that, fair and gracious and refined as these two were, the little wildling had the germs of something higher and nobler in her than these would ever have strength to know.

They called, and Nurse Stokes was in a flutter of delight at ladies coming at last to see her darling. John Rosslyn was pleased too, even though they were friends of the nephew whom he had not yet forgiven. Grace was to spend the day but one after that at Fairleigh House, and her dress was a great anxiety to her. She had her vanity, like any other girl, only it was by

fits and starts, instead of being the one steadily pervading influence. This visit was a little outlet into the world, of which she had seen so little, and felt curious to know more ; and these people knew Charles, so she would like to look her best, on his account. Did they appreciate him ? did they know how clever he was ? Had he ever read any of his poems or his stories to either of them ? She hoped not — she hoped the privilege of listening to them was reserved for her. She would have liked the whole world to do homage to his talents ; but, till the whole world did, she would have wished that the enjoyment of them should be confined to herself.

Mr. Rosslyn himself drove her over to Fairleigh House. In his heart he was almost as much excited as the girl at the thought of the visit. It was a little glimpse for Grace of that world from which

he had now and then fancied he had shut her out too much. Sometimes he had thought that it might have been better for Grace's sake if he had married again; "but then there might have been a lot of children to share with her, and a woman that perhaps she couldn't get on with." He warmed to Mrs. Horton at once—as most people did—and the sweet repose of Letty's manners had their charm for him, as they had for every one else. "If only my girl could look and talk like that," he thought, saluting Letty as reverently as he might a princess. She was a princess in her way, with her sweet stateliness—a princess before whom men were forced to fall down and pay homage, from Dr. Langton, with his chill, austere scholarship, to this sturdy yeoman, with the matter-of-fact nature that made him regard even a flower as a weed, and look upon the earth teeming with its

produce—golden with the glory of ripening corn, or greenly bright with summer grass—merely with an eye to its money produce and the value it would bring him in next market-day.

Letty's beauty had its effect even on him, although it would never bring in a penny on market-day, and was, for all utilitarian purposes, as utterly valueless as the bindweed which grew over his hedges, or the roses that peered in at his window.

John Rosslyn had sometimes said, when inveighing against the weeds that would spring up thick and fast over all his well-cultured lands—"What a pity the world wasn't made so that we could do without those trashy things the flowers!" And now here was a flower before him for which he could not help feeling in his heart that the world was all the richer.

If Letty's beauty had this effect upon

him, it had tenfold as much upon Grace. It was not only Letty, but all her surroundings ; the pretty bright drawing-room, with its flowers and books, the newness and freshness of everything around, and above all, the little sanctum—Letty's very own, where she took her to remove her out-door garments. Grace soon got warm and confidential — girls instinctively liked Mrs. Horton, and with Letty she was more in love than ever she had been with Anne Cundleigh. She told them how she passed her time, the books she read, and the flowers she most delighted in, only keeping silence as regarded her cousin. It was such a strange jumble of pursuits, so different from the ordinary routine of most young ladies' lives that Mrs. Horton felt herself fuller of pity than ever for a girl who was left to herself to lead such an erratic life.

"Don't you teach in the Sunday school?" she said, by way of directing her thoughts to something practical.

"I don't like the rector—he is high and narrow; I'm broad and rather low—we had a little difference about the time it took to create the world in; he knows nothing of science, and as my views were purely scientific ones, he intimated that he would rather I discontinued teaching—so I did. I was rather sorry, for I had a good class of boys; I liked them—I like all boys—and I rather think they liked me."

"But you should have conformed to the wishes of the rector, in his own school," said Letty, gently.

"Well, so I should, but when it comes to telling things I don't believe, how could I? But I wanted a girls' class—big girls, like myself—I should have liked to teach them something useful—better reading and

writing than they learn at school, and needlework ; my needlework isn't very good, but I think it's better than theirs," said Grace, modestly, "and a few other things besides—things that might keep some of them from going wrong so fearfully as they do ; but Nurse Stokes wouldn't hear of it. She's prejudiced and old, and said many of them were not fit for me to speak to—poor things."

"My dear, I think Nurse Stokes might be in the right," said Mrs. Horton, gravely. "It is not every village girl of your age whom a young lady should come in contact with."

"That's just it—just what Nurse Stokes said in plainer words. And how are the girls to be reached if every one keeps aloof from them—how are we to cure anything if we stand by and say it is too bad for us to go near ? I didn't want to make Chris-

tians of these girls; I shouldn't have taught them anything the rector himself would have minded, but I wanted to make women of them—honest, good, self-respecting women, and then I was shut up by Nurse Stokes and a parcel of rules that seem only made to tie one hand and foot.”

“You will find the value of those rules by-and-bye, dear,” said Mrs. Horton, who had never chafed against a single rule herself, but in all her kindly life had walked within bounds she had never felt tempted to pass.

As to Letty, she listened in mute wonderment; what strange, wild girl was this who wished to reform the world, and began by disputing her rector's authority in his own Sunday school? Letty did not like her rector, but she would never have thought of running counter to him. In his own parish a clergyman was in her eyes

an irresponsible pope, while in Grace's he seemed a mere mortal, and not half so wise as some mortals she knew; and Letty thought Nurse Stokes was in the right in preventing Grace from taking the village girls as pupils, if indeed they were so bold and coarse as Grace herself hinted at. She thought with Mrs. Horton, who said:

“You are too young to do these girls any good, dear; you had better leave them to others older than yourself to deal with.”

“Only where are the other and the older ones to come from?” said Grace. “It seems to me as if everything was always at a stand-still, waiting for the right person to come and do it, and the right person never comes; and those that would do what they can, while waiting for another to do it better, are found fault with and told to let ill alone.”

Launce and Bertie came running up the

path, towards the house, now. "What a blessing those boys must be!" cried Grace; "I am so fond of boys, and they look bright, clever ones. May they come here, Mrs. Horton? I should so like to have a good talk with them."

In they came, and Grace was soon at home with both; she had a long talk with Launce about Scott's novels, and Tennyson—she liked just the same heroes of the one that he did, and just the same poems of the other; then she went to see Bertie's rabbits and Jack's silkworms. After dinner she told Bertie and Launce of a wonderful gravel-pit where fossils were to be found as plentiful as blackberries on a common; also of a wide, shallow pool, where, unless a winter was unusually mild, skating was always to be found. She knew something of cricket, and a little of football—quite enough to talk about these subjects with a

zest and interest that delighted the boys ; indeed, Grace had a good deal of the boy in her, as most healthy girls, whose animal life has not been checked and dwarfed by rules and discipline, have.

Mr. Horton listened, and thanked Heaven his ward did not resemble her. For a young lady he was beginning to think Letty fairly endurable. After dinner she took Jack and Arnie, and told them fairy tales. Wonderful fairy tales they were. The two little ones had never had such a treat in their lives. Invested, on the spur of the moment, with a thousand little delicate touches of fancy and imagination, grotesque, queer, and yet with a wild fantastic grace of their own, one story came after another, till she paused, fairly tired for want of breath. Letty listened delightedly ; so did Mrs. Horton. They were beginning to estimate Grace more accu-

rately than her cousin did, What a strange, wild, sweet, clever girl she was !

They had begun with being willing to like her for Charles Rosslyn's sake, and to pity her a little for her own ; now they felt as if they must love her for herself, and as to pity—with all her crude ideas and erratic ways, this girl bade fair to ripen into something whom no one would dare to give that to.

The fairy tales were just ended when Miss Gwendoline Layne made her appearance. Miss Gwendoline was of one of the oldest families in St. Ewald's, and it had been a great mark of condescension on her part, the visiting Mrs. Horton. It is possible that she might never have done so at all had it not been for the accident which made them acquainted. Miss Gwendoline was five-and-forty, and had never in her youth been attractive, but she was a

rigid stickler for the proprieties; and although—her elder sister, the widow of a lieutenant in the army, being unable to chaperone her—Miss Gwendoline had to visit alone, still, she was escorted by her sister's page, with all due punctilio, to and from whatever festive gatherings she attended. That page was the strong point of Miss Gwendoline's gentility. She and her sister were poor, and with a lofty dignity alluded to the fact occasionally, as if mere wealth were too vulgar an adjunct to be worth their consideration.

But if need had been—and there was no such close need as that—they would have gone dinnerless four days out of the seven rather than have dispensed with that page. He was very small, but he was quite as big as they could get for the money, and Miss Gwendoline being tall and of a portly presence, he looked smaller still when

following her. In London rude boys might have made remarks upon the disparity, but in St. Ewald's they were generally better behaved. Not always; for one night, Miss Gwendoline returning home about nine o'clock, her page was beset by two or three butcher lads, who had been merry-making at a fair some distance off, and they maltreated him so that he appealed to his mistress for protection, clinging to her skirts in a most cowardly manner. Miss Gwendoline reproved him sharply for his cowardice; then she lectured the butcher boys; but the page only clung the more, and the butcher boys danced round like so many wild Indians, the foremost of them wondering "whether Buttons would have the pluck to take off his jacket and stand up to e'er a one on 'em." Poor little Buttons had never been in such a fright in his life. He fairly

roared, first to the butcher boys for mercy, and then to his mistress for protection, clinging to her at the same time in a style that Miss Gwendoline's stiff skirts were quite unused to.

Miss Gwendoline was alarmed—alarmed for her dignity, and for her page's livery. If she let him go those dreadful boys would follow and maltreat him, and, what was worse, his clothes, and how could she possibly stay there, listening to the jargon with which they were assailing her reluctant ears. In this dilemma Bertie and Launce Horton found her. They had been at the fair too; Launce looking on in a gentlemanly way, with an air of profound indifference to all that was going on that was very well done, longing the while to take his share of the amusements, vulgar as they were; and Bertie enjoying himself to the full extent of his pocket money—

shooting for nuts, playing at Aunt Sally, riding on donkeys, drinking ginger beer, and going round in whirligigs, till he had not a penny left, and was now returning home, thoroughly exhausted both in purse and person.

Not too tired, though, to assist Miss Gwendoline Layne, he had already floored one boy, while Launce was hesitating whether to tell the "cads" to desist, or appeal to them in a more forcible manner. Bertie's promptness settled that question, and Launce could only follow his example. Possibly, their valour alone might not have decided the day, had not one of the assailants recognised the new comers as the sons of a good customer of his master's. He took to his heels at once, the others thought it as well to follow his example, and Launce and Bertie remained thus easily the victors of the field.

Miss Gwendoline Layne was not ungrateful. Having ascertained to whom she was indebted, she called the next day to thank Mrs. Horton for the assistance her sons had so bravely given her. Mrs. Horton was quite proud to hear of such an exploit. Launce and Bertie figured like a couple of young Paladins in her eyes ; her heart warmed to Miss Gwendoline Layne solely because she had given her boys an opportunity of distinguishing themselves.

After a while it warmed to Miss Gwendoline on her own account. Mrs. Horton felt so sorry for her. A poor decayed lady of good family. Why had not some one married her long ago ? Was it too late to look for a husband for her yet ? Indeed, when Mr. Hesketh came, it seemed at first as if Miss Gwendoline Layne had been thrown in her way on purpose to mate with him. It would be such a good thing

for them both—especially for Mr. Hesketh, if she could bring them together. In all Mrs. Horton's matrimonial schemes, it was always the gentleman who was to benefit the most. Men were so helpless by themselves! But Mr. Hesketh returning to London as obstinate a bachelor as ever, it then occurred to Mrs. Horton that Dr. Langton had only sought shelter at her hands for the express purpose of being mated with Miss Gwendoline Layne. There was the very wife for him. Of good family and mature age—fond of boys, at least she always said so—though Launce and Bertie, after their one chivalrous effort in her defence, were shy of her—good-looking, at least quite good-looking enough for the Doctor, who, at his age, had no right to expect very much in that way from his wife—and almost as much in want of a husband as he was of a wife.

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Miss Gwendoline quite understood Mrs. Horton's intentions, and appreciated them. There are some women who seem born only to marry, and that failing them, their existence has lost its purpose. Miss Gwendoline was one of these—a girl of the last generation—as purposeless, as idle, as half-cultured, as the girls of this, without the restless striving for better things, the unsatisfied yearning for a higher, nobler life, than one eternal mill-round of amusements, which in the so-called “girl of the period” is at least likely to make her womanhood a better and a stronger thing than womanhood has been for many a year.

A husband was the one great goal of Miss Gwendoline's life. From her fourteenth year she had looked at every unmarried man she met, with a view to his fitness for the honour. She had danced at

garrison and county balls year after year, till at last her hopes of obtaining the youngest boy or the oldest veteran, grew almost extinct. She had attended archery meetings in the days when croquet was unheard of; caught cold upon cold through picnics and boating. She had toiled harder than many a slave, by night and by day, in the one unceasing pursuit, and not one offer, however unworthy, had fallen to her share. She had not given up hope yet, though the men who had been her partners in her early days were some of them grandfathers. She had nothing but this hope to cling to. If she did not marry what else was there for her? Not even an old age of cards to make up for her youth of folly, for cards were becoming obsolete now. Talk of the girls of the present day, and *their* half education; I wish, whenever such girls are disposed to

murmur at the scanty allowance dealt out to them, they would look back to the girls of their mother's time, and ask her how they fared.

Everything not half but quarter taught ; no, not that ! the barest sheerest outlines of the accomplishments, the merest smattering of other knowledge, a thin veneer laid on the coarse rough deal of ignorance. Some of these girls pushed their way to better things. Once a girl can read, let her remember she has a key that ought to unlock every gate she wishes to open. But Miss Gwendoline did not know how to use this key, neither would she have cared to unlock any gate that it would open. She kept up her music, though she had a thin, cracked voice, and a bad ear. In Miss Gwendoline's time every girl was expected to play, whatever nature said to the contrary ; she drew as boarding-school young

ladies did draw thirty years ago—that is, she copied pencil drawings very neatly, and painted flowers so well, that you could not just tell a rose from a buttercup without either being labelled ; wrote a thin angular hand — thirty years ago every girl wrote alike ; read novels—fashionable ones with the greatest relish of all, and dreaded opening any book of a more serious kind, lest she should be called a blue. As to politics, Miss Gwendoline would have been horrified at the idea of having any opinion on any such matters. They were unfit things for ladies to meddle with ; still, she and her sister always wished well to the Conservative candidate, because their family had always done so, and every one who was anybody at St. Ewald's voted for him. As to every thing else, Miss Gwendoline was perhaps as ignorant in her way as Richard Girling in his.

She had never tried to make herself other than she was. Other girls with such a slender store had married, why not she? After all, it was not that Miss Gwendoline was plainer or less amiable than others, only she was more unfortunate. They had hit their game, and she had failed in hers; that was all. The failure had not yet soured her very much, for she had hardly begun to realize how thorough it was, but still she was getting uneasy, and would have looked at those now whom twenty years ago she would have turned from in disdain; and once or twice, to her most especial intimates, Miss Gwendoline had been known to say, that, after all, there was something to be said in favour of Mormonism. To a woman, the end and aim of whose existence has been to procure a husband, it may possibly seem, when she is verging upon fifty, that the

fiftieth part of one is better than none at all.

Miss Gwendoline had felt herself aggrieved, in common with other unmarried ladies, at Dr. Langton's celibacy, but she had another and especial pique of her own against John Rosslyn. The Grange was not so very far from Belfoy Cottage, where she resided with her sister, and every time John Rosslyn drove forth in his well-appointed gig, looking so sturdily prosperous, or rode past on his stout cob, as good a horse as any in all Eastshire, Miss Gwendoline looked at him, and felt here was a man who wronged all womanhood in not selecting one from its crowded ranks to rule his home.

There had been no possibility of making his acquaintance till Grace came home, and when she did, the opportunity for which Miss Gwendoline had been waiting seemed long in coming ; therefore, when she saw

Grace installed in the dining-room of Fairleigh House, evidently on a familiar footing, Miss Gwendoline rejoiced exceedingly. She had not been five minutes in the room before Grace shocked her, as she had not yet shocked either Mrs. Horton or Letty, but she forgave the shock, even when Grace repeated it. Poor child! what better was to be expected of one who had had no mother to train her? If, ten years ago, Mr. Rosslyn had installed *her* in that mother's place, what a different creature Grace might have been! She could do a great deal with her now, teach her to do her hair, wear her dresses the proper length, and talk slowly and softly, and, above all, not talk as she was doing now to Mrs. Horton of a leader in the *Times*, which had caused a great sensation in the political world. What earthly business had a girl of eighteen—or, indeed, of forty-five—Miss Gwendoline's

own age—to know there were such things as politics in the world?

Grace was sent for soon, the pony-chaise, with Gibbons, her father's own man in it, coming for her, and then Miss Gwendoline saw her opportunity. It was too soon—much too soon—for Miss Rosslyn to return home; she would herself walk back with her; her page was coming for her at nine, and he would be sufficient escort for both. Grace was quite ready to stay; it was one of the gala days of her life. She told the children more fairy tales, and then she talked in the fulness of her heart of everything under heaven and earth, but just the very things, according to Miss Gwendoline, that a young lady ought to know. The page was punctual, and then Miss Gwendoline rose to go, but there was a basket of plants and roots Mrs. Horton had had prepared for her—the

surplus of her greenhouse. Could George carry it? it was large and heavy. Of course he could; in Miss Gwendoline's belief George was another Hercules. To have heard her speak of his powers you would have expected to see a six foot footman at the least; but if Mrs. Horton had seen the size of the basket, it would certainly never have been consigned to George.

Grace and Miss Gwendoline went on. Grace was quiet enough now. Miss Gwendoline was not at all the sort of person she could talk to as freely as she had done to Mrs. Horton or Letty. It was a clear moonlight night, the road was quiet and lonely, but under the protection of George, *etate* eleven, and small for his age, Miss Gwendoline always felt secure. They walked on; George toiling under his basket, Miss Gwendoline expatiating on the beauty of

the night, and questioning Grace as to her knowledge of St. Ewald's society. Grace felt bored, and wished herself at home. She was always impatient with commonplace people, and Miss Gwendoline's commonplaces were so very vapid. Presently she looked back and saw George a long way behind, borne down evidently by the weight of his basket. Miss Gwendoline was indignant.

"It's impossible for George to be any protection if he keeps at such a distance."

She waited for him, and, when he came up, reproved him with some austerity.

They went on again, and again George, overweighted, lingered behind : and again Miss Gwendoline paused, and again reproved him. Grace did something more.

"Basket too heavy, George, isn't it? Why what a mite you are, to be sure! I'll help you."

So she did, taking one handle of the basket, while George carried the other, and on they went—greatly to Miss Gwendoline's disgust. They came to the door of the Grange, and then Grace called for Gibbons.

"Carry this basket to Miss Layne's, and see her home safe. George, there's sixpence for you. Don't carry weights above your strength again. You'll stop that boy's growing if you set him to do it, Miss Gwendoline; I'd take a handle myself another time, if I were you."

Then, saying "Good-night," she went in, and gave Nurse Stokes an account of her day, winding up with a very unflattering description of Miss Gwendoline.

"A woman who hasn't an idea in the world. I wonder what she came into it for?"

"To get a husband," said Nurse Stokes, "an' she hasn't got him yet, for all her

tryin'. Yew weren't too great friends with her, child, and didn't ask her to call."

"No, and I left her at the door," said Grace. "Perhaps that wasn't quite the thing, for she meant to be civil in seeing me home."

"Ah! her civility had a meaning in it. Don't let her ever come beyond the door, child, or yew may find it hard to get her out again. I think, thanks to the school an' my looking after yew, yew haven't done so badly all these years without a step-mother, an' we don't want to be havin' one now."

Nurse Stokes need not have been disquieted. Grace had outraged Miss Gwendoline's feelings beyond endurance. Not even to be mistress of the Grange and all its surroundings would she have undertaken the charge of a girl who had not only walked side by side with a servant,

assisting him with his load, but had actually advised Miss Gwendoline to do so herself for the future.

John Rosslyn bore his disappointment after his own stolid fashion. He was civil to his nephew, and once in a way asked him to dinner. "He sha'n't think I'm angry with him because he won't have my girl," he thought, but he took care to leave him very little alone with Grace, and he contrived to prevent his escorting her in the brotherly fashion he had been used to do. If she spent the day at Fairleigh House or at Gordon Cundleigh's, he desired her to come home early, or would be driving down himself and would call for her in his way. He disliked society; he had lived out of it and was unfit for it, but he braced himself up to meet Mrs. Horton and thank her for her kindness to his girl,

and he would even have gone the length of asking the whole family to dinner, but that Nurse Stokes looked scared, and intimated that if "he was going company keepin', at that rate, he must look out for somebody who understood fine folks better nor she did." He contented himself therefore with asking the boys, and when Grace brought Letty after a time to spend the day with her, did the honours of the house to her with an elaborate politeness he would scarcely have taken the pains to exercise, had he known her for the unconscious rival of his child.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW TIME WORE ON.

THE autumn days faded and shortened into the winter ones, and, in the quiet old town, life went on as it had gone on for generations before. There was love, and there were hope, and doubts, and fears, troubles, and suspense, in these young human hearts, just wakening into a richer, fuller life, as there had been in thousands of hearts before them. It was the old story over again, the old story that was new to them just as it is at some time new to the life of every one of us.

Charles Rosslyn had meant to be very brave and strong, and kept his resolutions as well as most men do who make such in similar circumstances. He had intended to keep away from Fairleigh House as much as he could do consistently with politeness, and he was going to it on every possible opportunity.

Mrs. Horton had something to do with the matter. She liked him, and she knew his secret and, in spite of the prudent resolutions she had made, was not altogether displeased at it. Letty ought to have done better and looked higher, there was no denying it, but after all she would not do so badly if she had Charles Rosslyn. There would be a certain position as a clergyman's wife, and like most middle class Englishwomen, this was a position which Mrs. Horton rated very highly. Mr. Rosslyn might obtain a living, or, with part

of his wife's fortune—Mr. Hesketh must not be too obstinately bent upon settling it all on herself—one might be purchased. Or was it not possible that he might in time succeed to the head mastership of the grammar school? If Dr. Langton should take that disappointment which she saw was surely coming, too much to heart, he might find the neighbourhood so uncongenial to his feelings as to be glad to leave it. There were always openings for such a man, and in that case there would be an admirable one here for the Rev. Charles Rosslyn. In spite of that resolution of hers about croquet, she was becoming sanguine and hopeful in the matter; altogether on the side of the Rev. Charles; but then her boys liked him, which perhaps had almost as much to do with the matter as the fact that Letty liked him too.

It would have required a man of sterner

mould than the Rev. Charles to refuse Mrs. Horton's invitations to spend a quiet evening at Fairleigh House when he had nothing better to do. It was so very often that there was nothing better for him, that he found himself there at least three evenings out of the seven, turning Letty's music leaves, or taking his tea from her hand. He said nothing to her, of course—there was no necessity to say very much; the girl was thoroughly happy and content to wait till it pleased him to tell her in words what he had so long been telling her in other ways.

And he, too, was very happy—he could not help it—desperately, sinfully happy, he told himself at times. He had never meant to love, and love had come to him in the guise that he should least have looked for—as a monitor asking him what would be the outcome of all this aimless,

purposeless existence, which only the other day seemed to have been but for himself alone, and was now so merged into another's? It was not so very long ago since he had laughed at the commonplace routine of most men's lives, the dull, tame development into lover, husband, father, that seemed to so many the inevitable *rôle* they were called upon to play, and now all hope seemed centred in the possibility of playing that *rôle* well himself. To win a home, and support it, and ask Letitia Lisdale to share it—to see her by his hearth, to bear the brunt of life's battle for her sake, and keep her secure from harm; by-and-bye to see his child upon her bosom—just now this was not only more than he dared hope for; but what he felt he dared not hope even to be allowed to dream of. He had thrown away his life's chances, and the woman he loved could never be his wife

unless he would submit to let her buy him the bread he ate. If he could only have entered into Mrs. Horton's rational way of looking at matters, things would all have been so infinitely pleasanter.

Letty, fortunately for her present happiness, knew nothing of her lover's scruples. He had his reasons for waiting—perhaps he did not feel quite sure of her. She liked coquetting with him just a little—it was not right to let him feel that he might have her at once for the asking. She was full, all this time, of innocent dreams for the future; she was every bit as good a girl as Grace—in some things infinitely more charming and loveable; but she was certainly devoid of the heroic element which predominated in the other. Grace would have scorned a man who could have taken his living from her. She could not have loved her cousin as she did if it had not

been for her implicit faith that sooner or later he would do something to justify that love. She never saw him as he was, but as he was to be. Letty was quite contented that he should be nothing higher or better than his present self. Richer—yes, that certainly would be desirable, and though she was not so well aware as Mrs. Horton how matters could be arranged, still she was satisfied that her five thousand pounds could do a very great deal for him. She never wanted fame or distinction for him—a quiet little rectory in the country, if possible ; a small circle of friends—“ nice ” people—that was a favourite word both of hers and Mrs. Horton’s—a snug little establishment—by-and-bye children—poor to visit and help—books, and a garden for recreation : this was Letty’s future, in which she meant to do her duty honestly, a good wife, mother, mistress, friend ;

and so let life run on to its quiet ending.

Whatever latent force of character there might be in this girl, there had been as yet nothing to draw it out ; if her life went on as it was doing now, or with only such tame joys and sorrows as seemed likely to befall it, such force would never be developed. She would be good, charming, sweet and true, but it would be just a chance if the conventionalities of life would not prevent the true nobleness of her character from being drawn out.

John Rosslyn had been very ready to allow his daughter to form an acquaintance which appeared likely to let her have a little more insight into society than she had yet done.

"She has been shut up too much, and it's my fault," he said to himself ; "though I don't know how I could do better, for a girl

without a mother, than I have done. At any rate, she shall go to this house as much as they like to ask her, and I hope before long she'll see some one who'll put that young jackanapes of a cousin of hers out of her head."

He could not forgive him—he could not bring himself to see that his nephew had at least acted honestly and disinterestedly, and he was not at all inclined to reward his disinterestedness by presenting him with the living of Clayford.

"If my girl isn't good enough for him, let him keep any girl that is as he can," he said sullenly. "I'd have done a great deal for him, being Hartley's boy; but if he puts a good chance away, it's not my fault, but his—I reckon he won't have such another offered him again in a hurry."

Grace and Letty had become fast friends.

Neither of the girls knew how she might cross the other's life. Grace spent long days at Fairleigh House, but was generally fetched early in the evening, so that it was not often she met her cousin there. When he came, his manner had undergone a change, which she thought she understood, and which pleased her greatly. He was quieter, graver, kinder, and if I may use the word, more reverential to her. He wished by degrees to lessen the cousinly familiarity between them, or to make it take a shape more in accordance with their altered years. And he was thankful, too, to the girl, even for the bitterness conveyed in some of her words—they had roused and stirred him ; if they could not help him to win another, at least they might make him more worthy of that other. And Grace herself was changing. Letty had done her an infinite amount of good ; she was growing

more like other girls externally, even if still unlike them in many things. Letty had rubbed off some of her rough angles, polished and refined her, and in return she had done more for Letty than she was aware of. Life had been very smooth to her : of its deeper meaning, its higher aspirations, the tragic significance so often underlying it, she had never been called to think till this strange, unconventional girl bade her do so. If ever she became Charles Rosslyn's wife, he would find in her a higher tone, a more earnest spirit, because the little, untrained cousin, whom he had once told her he wished she could make something of, had woke something in her which her life in the Cathedral Close, with all its still decorous days, had failed to do.

But if Grace was no martyr to jealousy, Dr. Langton was. More and more this love had come so late was growing on

him, and with it came a torture which he had never anticipated. There was a rival, and not an easy one to contend with, and yet one with whom contention seemed to place him in an absurd, almost anomalous position. It seemed ridiculous for him to be entering the lists with his own assistant master, and yet there was no denying that if the Rev. Charles was a much poorer man than himself, he was also a much handsomer and younger one. And as to his poverty, the lady's fortune would go some way to counterbalance that. It was an inexpressible relief when Mr. Rosslyn informed him of his intention to leave the school at Christmas. He could give the Doctor no information as to his future, not being very clear as to it himself. But he was going to leave St. Ewald's, that he had resolved on, and to look for a better opening elsewhere.

The Doctor promised with, for him, sufficient graciousness, everything that was satisfactory in the way of testimonials, remembering that it was well to build a bridge for a flying foe, and hoped, stiffly, that Mr. Rosslyn would find a better outlet for his energies than they had had in the town and school of St. Ewald's.

Then he was a little at rest, but only for a time. Even if Charles Rosslyn left St. Ewald's, would he not leave memories behind that it might be hard for him to efface. Women were such fools—so easily led away by a pleasant smile and a little flattery. Even while he was ready to risk his every chance of happiness on a woman, he could not help looking on her sex much as had done the monks of old—as inferior creatures at the best; one way or another sure to be the bane and torment of any man who suffered them to mingle in his plan of

life. He was more wretched than he had ever been in all his life before, and he could tear himself from neither the scene nor the cause of his misery. Night after night he was in Mrs. Horton's drawing-room, watching every word, and look, and tone that was interchanged between these two, who, for his misery, seemed to have fallen in love with each other.

The more miserable Letty made him, the more he loved her. And yet, at times, when he thought of all the wretchedness she had brought upon him, he could almost have found it in his heart to hate her, and certainly found it quite in his heart to hate the Rev. Charles Rosslyn.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUT OF PRISON.

IT was two days before Christmas. Even St. Ewald's woke to a little life at this time, and the shops which were usually so bare and unattractive as to show that they relied upon their "aristocratic connection," and disdained to make any effort to attract chance custom, now put on a little bravery of hollies and laurels, cleared up their windows, put out their most attractive wares, and tried to wear for once a faint semblance of thrift, and bustle, and stir.

The boys had left school, and in every

household to which they belonged in the town they made their presence felt. And as boys will assert themselves, even in the stillest and most exclusive of country towns, so St. Ewald's was roused to something like a semblance of life by the lads chasing each other through its streets, sliding in its gutters, or building heaps of snow-balls in its corners. There were boys, there was snow, there was Christmas—even St. Ewald's for once looked as if it was nearly as much awake as the rest of the world.

Charles Rosslyn had finished for ever with the school, but he could not bear as yet to leave the town. He had not yet finally decided on his future course; the first thing was to proceed to London, where he had a prospect, through some of his old college friends, of one or two openings, but there was no immediate hurry about

going there, he said—it would be only throwing money away, to spend it in London while everybody was holiday making; besides, his uncle had asked him to spend the Christmas Day with him, and after their late coolness it would be churlish of him to refuse to do so.

But it was only the Christmas dinner he was to eat at the Grange; the Christmas Eve was to be spent at Fairleigh House. Mrs. Horton had asked him there, and she had not asked Dr. Langton. She was very sorry for the latter, and had done her best to cure him of his foolish fancy for Letty. It was quite right that he should wish to be married—it was only a pity that he had not entertained such a wish twenty years ago; it would have been a great deal better for him, and for the boys, too. She felt more and more interested in the Doctor's marrying, on their account as well as his.

A man without a wife to humanize him was, according to Mrs. Horton, a poor, one-sided creature from whom the gentler amenities of life could hardly be expected. It was no wonder that he was harsh and hard and dry in his school, when he had no ministering angel by his fireside to smooth away the unavoidable irritations of his daily life. She had done her best to provide him with such an angel ; a mature, well-grown one, of a suitable age and appearance ; but the Doctor, obstinately bent upon a younger seraph in the person of Letty, would have nothing to do with the riper one whom Mrs. Horton had so persistently thrown in his way.

She was not a bit disheartened by that fact. The Doctor wanted a wife to make him comfortable, and develope such paternal faculties in him as would lead to his understanding boyish nature better. Miss Gwen-

doline Layne wanted a husband—it was Mrs. Horton's duty to bring them together, and a duty she was determined to perform. The Doctor might want Letty, but he couldn't have her. Children cry for the moon sometimes, but have something else more easily attainable given them instead. The Doctor must be treated like a child—managed, humoured, and brought somehow to see what was good for him, and take it, whether he exactly wanted it or not.

She had never been so happy a woman, any Christmas of her life, as she was this. Not only had she a house and guests of her own, and all her boys about her, and the prospect of giving little entertainments and dispensing hospitalities without let or hindrance from confined space or cross-grained landladies, but she had the love affairs of Letty and Mr. Rosslyn to watch over and encourage, and the interests of the Doctor

and Miss Layne to direct and preside over.

Mr. Horton did not share his wife's felicity. Love and match-making might interest her, but they did not interest him. Neither had she taken him into her confidence at all in the matter. She had the profoundest respect for his talents and acquirements, but things such as these were much too delicate for any creature masculine to meddle with. So that he could not forget his own miseries in the interests of others ; and during all these holidays he was in a chronic state of misery. The boys were simply insufferable and incomprehensible. There was no stillness in the house—there was no stillness out of it. They were racing, sliding, jumping, leaping, shouting, hurrahing, doing anything and everything but—what it seemed utterly im-

possible for boyish nature to do—keep quiet.

It was very certain that whether marriage would, or would not, teach Dr. Langton to understand the nature of boys, it had utterly failed to do so in Mr. Horton's case.

It was a little better when Mr. Hesketh came. At least, he had some one to whom to bemoan his troubles; it was useless doing so to his wife. She accepted the turbulence of her sons as an indication of their perfect health, and would have borne any amount of headaches herself rather than have seen them over-quiet. That was all very well for her, but she expected him to bear the headaches too, and not only headaches, but the interruption to his pursuits, the invasion of his study, the fingering his fossils, the inspection of his curiosities—even the testing by taste the quality

of the spirit in which he had lately taken to keep some pet monstrosities — there seemed no atrocity of which boyish nature was not capable, and for which maternal nature could not find some excuse.

Launce had watched with no small delight the progress of the Doctor's love. Nay, he had even ventured to ask Letty to let him "spoon on her a little," with a view to the softening the acerbities of his temper. Letty had pretended to be indignant at the request, but she had smiled a little more graciously on the Doctor the next time he came, and many times after that. If he was nicer with the boys, because he found things pleasant at Fairleigh House, why, they should be made pleasant to him. She had no objection to humour the boys in this matter, and she was too pre-occupied by other matters of far more interest than the possible state of

an elderly gentleman's heart to be quite so clear-sighted as Mrs. Horton as to the true nature of his feelings for her. So that the Doctor had had just a little grain of hope given him to feed on—a little grain, which had supported him wonderfully even in the midst of all his jealousy.

He was tolerably content, on the whole, this morning before Christmas-day. He was to spend the morrow at Fairleigh House; he did not know that Miss Layne would be there to meet him, and he did know that Mr. Charles Rosslyn would spend it at the Grange, so that there would be a clear stage for him. And, very soon after, his late assistant-master would leave St. Ewald's, when, if he had made any undesirable impression on Miss Lisdale's mind, it was to be hoped that time and absence would obliterate it. He felt sanguine to-day on the matter—younger, and

more hopeful, and more full of life than he had done for many years. It might be the weather—it was a clear, frosty day, and this kind of day always suited him—or the relief from his labours with the sixth-form : he did not put it in these words to himself, but he had not felt so little like a don and so much like a man for many years—perhaps not since he had last kissed that low-born love of his, of whom now, if he ever thought, it was only to wonder how, even in the hey-day of his wild youth, such a creature could have captivated him. He had changed since then. It seemed almost incredible now that ever a time had been when he had almost imperilled his social existence and prospects for the sake of a woman who had red hands, and spoke in the broad Eastshire dialect.

He would take a long walk this morning, through the town, and out into the open

country beyond ; it might be he should fall in with Miss Lisdale on his way. With all his passion—and it was as intense as if he had been a boy of twenty—he never thought of her but as Miss Lisdale. He dressed himself carefully in this hope, and then he looked in the glass a little anxiously, and yet with some satisfaction. He did not think that he looked old for his years—men with twice his wrinkles had had brides as young as she—men with hair already silvered ; and his was only turning grey at the temples. He frowned a little as he caught sight of the traces of the scar remaining from the wound which the vagrant had inflicted. The hurt had not been much at the time, but the mark would not go away. “The fellow deserved a twelvemonth for that alone,” was his thought, “but it was not worth my while appearing against him.” Then he brought

a side-lock or two carefully over the place, and, taking his hat and gloves, went on his way.

That way took him down a long, dull street, in which, high and grim, stood the dreariest building in all St. Ewald's. It was old and dingy, with massive walls, and narrow slit windows, protected still further by iron bars. It was the town jail, and round its door stood this morning a group of people—several prisoners were to be discharged that day, and these, their friends, were waiting for them. Of course, the majority were women—coarse-featured, loud-voiced, shrewish women, some of them ; meek, pale, timid creatures, others ; but all, perhaps, to some extent, similar in the long-suffering and much endurance which seems born like a second nature in women of the poorer classes, meted out according to their needs of it by that merciful Providence

which, if it does not temper the wind to the shorn lamb, at least thickens the fleece to bear it.

There were a mother and sister waiting for the fourth time to take their prodigal home, as they had taken him before, to give him another chance of leading honest courses. They would give him something like Christmas fare the next day, but they had lived on bread and tea for the last week to obtain it for him. There was a wife with a child on one arm, another at her skirt, waiting for the man who, three months before, had been sent to prison for half-killing her in a drunken fit. The poor little home was bright with holly, there was food in the cupboard, and materials for a pudding on the morrow—she had pawned her shawl to obtain them—and a clear little fire in the grate ; her winter petticoat had gone to buy the coals, and now she had

come with the children to "bring daddy home again."

There were two or three wretched beings of a lower class than these, creatures soddened and debased by drink and vice, whose tawdry finery and dirty rags told their own tale in the contrast to the clean, worn garments of the prodigal's mother and the drunkard's wife. They were waiting, too, to welcome those who would most likely only leave the prison to return to it before long, the habitual thieves, the incorrigible criminals, who form a class of their own in every town in the kingdom. Well, even for these there was something of a home to go to, and the gin bottle would be replenished on their behalf, and the songs and the jokes would be yet more boisterous on the morrow, so that after a sort there would be Christmas even for them.

Dr. Langton saw this group, and was vexed with himself that he had come down the prison street. He might so easily have taken another turning, and so avoided an encounter with these squalid, wretched creatures. He would have crossed, but that there was no pavement on the other side, only a long, dead garden wall facing the prison. Then as he caught the meaning of the group, he wondered if any of them were waiting for the vagrant whom he had been instrumental in sending back to prison, and as the thought occurred to him and he remembered the scar on his cheek, he commented with a little bitterness on the miserable lenity that had only given the miscreant six months.

No, [there was nobody waiting for Dick Girling; he had not a friend in the world; had never had a friend in his life, he told the chaplain in answer to his inquiries.

Father, mother—well, he had had them—at least a mother, but he had had to shift for himself since he was ten years old, and had never been in trouble before. He had not much to tell of himself, not much to remember: a miserable home, with a woman in it whom he called mother, and a man who was her husband, but he had no reason to think his father. A little attendance at the National School, when crow-scaring and stone-picking did not interfere; at Sunday School, where he had tried hard to learn the creed, and never got more than half-way through it; then a death, his mother's, and after that another woman in her place, who treated him badly, and made the man, who had never been too kindly disposed towards him, give him more blows and cuffs than ever. Then he had left them and found work in another place, and so kept himself, labouring hard and living.

hard, till there came the sudden temptation of helping himself to the contents of an unprotected larder, and he had been detected, and so here was the end of it.

That was the story he had told the chaplain—in the main a true one—he had left out some things—he was very little better than an animal ; but even animals have a cunning of their own, so he had omitted to say that the foray on Mr. Hubbin's larder had not been the first offence of the kind he had committed, and that, considering his innate stupidity, he had become a very tolerable poacher. He had thought it best not to shock the reverend gentleman by such disclosures, and on the whole had made a very well-behaved prisoner. He was not rebellious about the fare, he could bear it better than men who had been used to more liberal diet, and he did his task of oakum picking with a stolid, uncomplaining

patience, just as he had gathered up the stones from the unploughed fields, or weeded the turnips, when he was a boy. It didn't tire him half so much as following the plough, and he never got wet through over it. If he didn't understand what the chaplain had to say, he heard him civilly, and was clever enough to appear impressed by his exhortations. He gave the warders no trouble, doing just what he was told, so that on the whole if it had not been for that escape of his out of the prison walls when first shut in them, he would have been almost a model prisoner.

His time was up now, and he was to go out. Others who were to leave prison on that day were to go too, and all but he had some one awaiting them at the prison doors. He alone was utterly friendless, but the fact never seemed to trouble his stolid apathy. He had some instinct within him

that told him he was born to work, that perhaps without the work of such as he the world could not go on, and so the work, unless the frost lasted very long, would be found for him to do, and meanwhile there were hay-ricks to sleep in, and hen-roosts to rob. He would work if work came in his way, but he had certainly made up his mind not to starve.

Into this mind, if I may call that so which certainly in intelligence and perception was surpassed by many of the dumb creation, only one idea, in spite of all the chaplain's teaching, had found its way. And it was an idea that would not have been at all satisfactory to that worthy gentleman, had he known it. *Had* he known of it, he could have done no good; there it was, fixed, sullen, stolid, irremovable: the consciousness that he had been wronged and injured gratuitously by the

man who had informed the thief-catchers where to find him. Against these he bore no malice, it was their work and they had got their living to get, and so they had tried to catch him just as he sometimes snared pheasants or trapped hares. So it was with the warders, the chaplain, the governor of the jail, all the component living parts of the prison machinery—he felt no resentment against them; they were paid to do what they did, and they had to earn their money. He had fought hard for his liberty when the officials had come up to him; he had broken prison walls when he had first been shut up in them. He would have fought harder still if he had known how; he would have broken from prison again only that they had taken care to confine him too securely this time. That was all fair on his part, and on theirs; only what was not fair was, that a man who had got

“nothing to get by it, should peach on him.” He couldn’t forgive that. He made up his mind that sooner or later he would show that he had never done so ; *how* he never set himself to think ; but, by broken windows or broken bones, Dr. Langton would be very likely to learn before long that he would have been a wiser man if he had let the hunted vagrant rest in his lair.

As the Doctor came towards the jail, the gates opened and out came the released prisoners. One had his mother and sister crying in a moment on his neck, to the pretended disgust of the gaoler, who bade them move on, and try and keep the fellow from coming there again. The wife put her hand within her husband’s arm and held up the baby to him. He was to understand by that that all was forgiven and forgotten ; blows, kicks, and oaths, and that

he was to be welcomed back to his home and hearth as if he had been the best husband and father in the world. There was a noisier and coarser welcome given to the others, still they were welcomed back into the outer world ; only Dick Girling stood without a hand held forth to lead him back for good or evil to his fellow-men. There he was, quite alone, and seemingly neither sorry for his loneliness, to which perhaps he had become long since inured, nor glad of his freedom, that would certainly entail hardships, and might possibly starvation. He looked round him as if he could hardly bear the full broad light of day, and then his eyes met the Doctor's, which were resting on him with a little languid curiosity. This creature was hardly worth the caring very much about, but still he felt a little vague surprise at the fact of their meeting again. It was an odd coincidence that the

man should come in his way once more. And then the one feeling which had stirred Dick Girling's sluggish soul to its depths awoke, and the evil thing looked out of his heavy eyes, and from under his shaggy eyebrows, with so strange a meaning that the Doctor felt the scar on his temple throb again, and, thinking it was a pity that there were no galleys in England where beings of this type might be set to work, so that their fellow-men who led decorous lives might never be troubled by the hideousness of their presence, went on his way. And Dick Girling went on his, muttering something in his broad Eastshire dialect, that if Dr. Langton could have heard and understood, would have made him wish for the galleys more heartily than ever.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK GIRLING IN LUCK.

GRACE ROSSLYN stood at the gate of her father's garden that morning, looking up the track that led through the fields into the high road. Her cousin had been invited for the morrow, but she had a half hope that he would come that day. It was so clear, and bright, and frosty, surely it was enough to tempt him out of the town to go skating with her on the great pond in the long fields. She was very happy this sunny winter day; the young blood in her was bounding and

tingling as it only bounds and tingles in the teens when we have young life before us, and are in tune with the sun and the clear atmosphere, and the singing of birds, and the beauty of flowers—and all the best and sweetest things of outer life seem only an echo of the better fuller life within. She was happy, though within a few days Charles Rosslyn was to leave St. Ewald's and her, and try his fortune in the great metropolitan world. She was happy, for she had urged him to go, and she believed that he was going at her bidding, and—not to make himself more worthy of her, but—to act so that she would have more cause to be proud of him than ever. He was her knight, going to win fame and honour at her behest. The world was to know him, now, as she knew him ; to know and believe in him as she believed in and honoured him. The weeks and months would be

very long without the sight of his face, or sound of his voice ; the days, at times, very weary when there was no prospect of his coming. But she would bear all that for the great joy the thought would bring her that now at last he was doing justice to himself.

After all, was it to be wished that this girl should have the desire of her heart given her ? That this love of which she thought herself so secure, so thoroughly possessed, that not a shade of jealousy or disquiet ever troubled her, should be hers ? If she were ever Charles Rosslyn's wife, the waking would inevitably come, and she would see him as he was ; no man to influence a world, or stir a people's heart to its depths, no great worker building up in the present with toil and self-sacrifice, something that future generations, one after the other, should thank him for, no

earnest thinker whose dreams should be embodied in a nation's life, but just a pleasant, easy-tempered, clever young fellow, with a kind heart, a genial manner, a moderate amount of scholarship, some talent, and no genius whatever.

It would be good for neither of these two if they intermarried. Grace, though she knew it not now, had the stronger, higher nature, and in the inevitable course of things, the weaker, before long, would lean on hers. And it is not good for a woman to have to give support where she should find it. Grace, as Charles Rosslyn's wife, would grow harsh and hard,—through the very intensity of her love, its sweetness would all turn to bitterness when she saw the shortcomings of her idol. Charles Rosslyn would be in his rightful place as the husband of a woman of a lower mental calibre, a weaker nature, than his cousin's.

The very weakness would make him strong. He would grow self-reliant and self-dependent in proportion as he had another to rely and depend upon him.

But let us be thankful for the priceless moments of happiness that are sometimes given us. Aye, even though they are based upon the veriest delusion that ever chained the senses. Let the waking be as bitter as it may, not the less we have had the dream, and all the dreary after-hours of a lifetime cannot rob us of its recollections. Granted, that we were in a fool's paradise, but it *was* a paradise after all ! And perhaps Grace Rosslyn was not altogether to be pitied, because, this bright winter morning, she was rejoicing in a love that was never to be hers, and believing in a future that she should never see.

She had been so busy all the day before, and all the early hours of this morning,

making the old house bright with the holly which the labourers had brought in from the hedges where it grew thick and strong. She had sent a huge bunch of it to Mr. Cundleigh, and a basket of Christmas fare, that would make his table a more plentiful one for some days to come than he was in the habit of seeing it. There had been a smaller bunch and basket for Mr. Ross. Mrs. Horton no doubt would remember him, but Grace liked to remember him too. She was full of pity for this stranger, weak and crippled. She had seen very much of him lately, not only at the Cundleighs', but in the dull winter days at his lodgings. He seemed to have grown fond of her, in a gentle, fatherly, almost caressing way, that the girl liked.

Her own father was kind, and in these latter days, out of compassion for the wrong he thought she had sustained at her

cousin's hands, unusually indulgent, and, as far as he knew how to be, tender and gentle with her. But his gentleness was so different from Mr. Ross's. With the one it was an instinct—an inherent part of his nature ; with the other, a thing acquired,—worn for the nonce, because he had something hurt and bruised to deal with. And Grace, who knew not that she had any hurt or bruise for which to be pitied, was sometimes puzzled at this manner of her father's. Then she solved the puzzle in a manner that added to her happiness. Her cousin was going away, and her father thought his absence would be a grief to her, and so was more pitiful and tender towards her, than he had ever been yet. He did not know, and she could not tell him, that it was she who had urged Charles to leave them and seek out some career more worthy of himself than he would

ever find in St. Ewald's. That was her secret and her pride. He was going, and at her bidding, to win that place in the world which she had always felt was his due.

The happiest hours of her life,—the last three months—happier even than those spent with Gordon Cundleigh, even when the old man's words found their completest echo in the young soul that was, under their influence, learning to measure its strength ; happier even than those spent with Letty, whom she had learned to love so much, in right of her beauty, and the charm of her sweet temper and manner—were passed with Mrs. Payne's lodger. She liked to hear him tell of the old German towns where he had dwelt, the universities where he had taught, the bearded, long-haired students, and the mighty amount of beer they consumed. He had a

good store too of German legends and stories from the poets to repeat. And on his part he was never weary of hearing her recount the remembrances of her childhood—all those happy holidays when Charles and she had been at home together, when they had aided and abetted each other in the pranks in which girl, as well as boy, especially delighted. Hartley Rosslyn thus learned a great deal of his son's boyhood and youth; and Grace was quite unconscious that the reason he so delighted in her visits to him, was that she could talk as much as she pleased of her cousin, and that he was never weary of listening about him.

Sometimes she saw Charles Rosslyn there. It was so easy for him to take the book or the periodical that he had lent Gordon Cundleigh in to Mr. Cundleigh's next-

door neighbour, and his was a nature that especially delighted in performing little kindnesses. The small benevolences of social life came so pleasantly from his hands. Also, he liked to talk about German literature to a man who had studied it at the fountain head, and after a long discussion with Gordon Cundleigh on the politics of the day, Rénan's last heresy, or Maurice's last new interpretation of the creed of his fathers, to dream away an hour in talk about Uhland and Goethe, or hear Schiller's words poured forth with as true an utterance as if the speaker had been born in the Vaterland.

Hartley Rosslyn was on his guard now. Mr. Charles Rosslyn always found himself warmly welcomed in Mrs. Payne's apartments; but, that the man before him counted the hours of his absence, and wearied for his coming; that, with the exception of one

voice, and that the voice of the mother who had borne him, his was the most welcome that had ever sounded in the ears of this pale, way-worn-looking man, he had not the shadow of an idea. Hartley Rosslyn almost begrudged himself this indulgence, and yet it was impossible altogether to give it up. And after all, when the spring came, and he should be well and strong, and his crippled limbs be enabled again to perform their office, he was to leave St. Ewald's and England for ever, only carrying away with him the memory of the son whom he might never claim.

Grace had spoken to her father of Mrs. Payne's lodger, and from her description of him, and her account of the manner in which he had been brought under the notice of the residents at Fairleigh House, John Rosslyn guessed that it was his own brother whom his girl was so pleased to visit.

He did his best to feel angry with him for remaining in the neighbourhood, and for allowing Grace to visit him ; then he broke down in the attempt. After all, he was not half so hard a man as he believed himself to be, or wished other people to think him. He said nothing to dissuade Grace from going, nay, of late he had asked her how Mr. Ross's rheumatism was progressing. He would not go near him, but he was pleased to hear that Grace had been reading aloud to him on his "bad days;" there were some days when the damp and cold affected him terribly, and even his eyes suffered so much that he was unable to read, and at such times, Grace, whom nature and Gordon Cundleigh between them had trained into a very charming reader, would spend hours in Mrs. Payne's parlour, trying her best to soothe the invalid by the magic of her voice or the words she read aloud.

Once she had stopped so long that she was afraid her father would be angry with her for keeping the pony waiting in the cold, and himself waiting for his tea, but Mr. Ross had seemed in such suffering, and as if he was so loth to part with her, that she had stayed considerably past her usual time. She was a little afraid of meeting her father's grave, hard face, when she went in and hurriedly told him the reason, half expecting two or three words of chiding—and chiding, however slight, from John Rosslyn, was what few who knew him would care to encounter—but all she had was, “That's well, child ; do your best, when you can, to make a hard bed softer.” And, after that, she felt free to stay with Mrs. Payne's lodger as late and as long as she pleased.

That morning, when she had been putting up the fowl, and the pears, the mince-

pies, and the dainty pat of fresh butter in the little basket she was going to send him, her father came in with, "Here, child, is a pheasant, one of a pair Felix Smythies has sent in this morning ; put it in the basket, too, and these Ripstones, from the old tree. We had not a good crop, but a man who has been long in foreign parts doesn't get such apples as these, I reckon."

And then he went out, thinking of a time when he had lamed his foot, and so could get no pippins from the tree in which he especially delighted, and of the elder brother who had climbed it for him, and falling down head foremost, had been laid up for a week with a sprained wrist. It was weakness, perhaps, his sending him the fruit, but it was Christmas time, and "it was not as if he were going to stop here," he muttered ; "he'll be far enough away this time next year."

Grace had sent off her basket, and a great many things besides. Hers was a royal, lavish nature, and she was all the happier now for the thought of the good things which she had prevailed upon her father to allow her to dispense so freely. She had made up her mind she would not grieve very much if her cousin did not come that day. He would have so much to do before he went to London—people to call on, and to say Good-bye to ; the Hortons had been kind to him, and asked him to their parties—he must go there ; letters to write, and packing to do—how she wished with all her heart, she could do his packing for him, in which case, as Anne Cundleigh would have told her, it would have been rather worse done, if possible, than if he had performed it himself.

Well, they should have the morrow. He was to come early in the morning, and they

were to go to church together. Then there would be the walk home, and the dinner ; and afterwards, while her father slept by the fire, they would stroll out on the hard, frosty ground by the bare, black hedges, and catch the last bit of sunlight as the pale, wintry, gold and crimson streaks of light were hidden behind the trees of the wood. Then back to tea, and afterwards stories by the fire, and roasted chesnuts, and then, if her father dozed again, which perhaps he would be good enough to do, some glimpses of that life in the great world which he was about to lead, and from whence she hoped to hear so many echoes of his name. They would be quite by themselves on the morrow, so that he would be wholly hers ; and so, with that to look forward to, she might well be happy to-day, even if it did not bring him.

Presently she heard a step, at which she

turned her head. Not for a moment, however, thinking it was her cousin's—it was dull, slow, and heavy, as different as possible from his elastic tread. Looking up, she saw a man before her with his eyes fixed on her, much as a child's might be on a gaily-coloured toy, or a tempting apple, only with a coarseness in his admiration that a child's would never have evinced. Had she not seen such a look before? Had she not at some time seen such slouching shoulders—such dull, soulless features? And in a moment came the answer to her question. This was the vagrant whom she had fed, and whom Dr. Langton had betrayed—that was Grace's word for it; she never stopped to consider the duty the Doctor, as a citizen, owed to the law—betrayed to those who were in search of him. Her first feeling was one of anger that the man should stand and stare at

her so fixedly, her next of pity for the poor wretch who had made such a bold stroke for his freedom, and then been so pitilessly sent back to his prison. She knew his name, it had been in all the local papers, and she said—

“Are you Richard Girling?”

He felt emboldened by her tone; even his dull senses could understand the compassion in it, and, drawing a little nearer, he said—

“Yes, that be my name. How come yew tew know on it?”

“Of course I know it. Didn’t you escape from prison, and were you not caught and taken back, and did I not tell you to come to me as soon as you were free, and I would see if my father could find you work to do? Is that what has brought you here now?”

“Yes; I’d need to work, for I’m nigh

starved. What they gie us in they walls will just keep the life agoin', an' that's all. Bread-and-water, and not nigh half enough o' that."

He had lived perhaps better in prison than in all his life as a farm labourer he had ever done before. But if he had little sense, he had plenty of cunning, and if a lie or two would interest this good-looking young lady in his favour, why should he not tell them ? He remembered her bounty before, and perhaps this might lead to her giving him something to eat at once, in which supposition he was right.

"Come with me into the kitchen," she said ; "you look perished with cold. You shall have some breakfast, and then I'll speak to my father about you. What work have you been used to do ?"

"Pretty nigh everythin' about a fearm," said Richard Girling.

And then he followed her into the large flagged hall, and so into the great stone-paved kitchen, warm, and glowing with a fire that it warmed one's very heart to see. From the great oaken rafters of the roof hung noble hams and flitches of bacon, while amidst the tin covers and platters holly berries glistened their brightest. It was a place redolent of homely, plentiful comfort, and Nurse Stokes, the presiding genius, sat by the fire in her cushioned easy-chair, a strip of carpet under her feet, on which a majestic tabby cat was reposing, whilst she pared and shred apples into a basin in her lap. She looked up as Grace came in.

"Eh, child, who have we got here?"

"Some one I'm going to give a breakfast to, nurse. Don't disturb yourself," for there was an outcry from Nurse Stokes at

this invasion of her precincts, "I'll wait on him myself."

And she spread a cloth, and brought him beer and bread-and-meat, and then left him, telling him to wait her return ; after which she went to seek her father, and tell him that she had a labourer waiting to be engaged in the kitchen ; and, though that which was his chief recommendation in her eyes, the fact that he had broken prison, been re-caught, and now, having spent his time there, was again at large, was not likely to prepossess John Rosslyn very greatly in his favour, still, it was not very difficult to persuade him to engage Richard Girling for a short time upon trial. It would please Grace, and just at this time it would have been hard to find anything that John Rosslyn would not have done to please "the child."

CHAPTER X.

MR. HESKETH'S CHRISTMAS.

HE enjoyed it as he had never enjoyed a Christmas before. Year after year he had spent this season in his London home, dining mostly alone, because everybody felt sure that with Mr. Hesketh's large circle it would be useless to invite him to their houses, as he would be certain to have a party at home ; and not asking anybody, because he entertained the same opinion of them. His housekeeper had sent him up the conventional plum-pudding, and he had made a point of eating

enough to disagree with him. He had sipped his wine, and eaten his turkey, and thought that of all the mere farces of which our conventional life is so full, that of keeping a merry Christmas was the sheerest and most absurd. A man without any family ties, and with no relations within the seventh degree, or nearer than the Land's End, it had been something inexpressibly new to him to be domiciled, as he had found himself the previous summer, in Mr. Horton's house, taken, as it were, at once into the very heart of a family, and allowed to see all the interior main-springs of what he had sometimes considered the most troublesome and expensive piece of machinery in existence, and wondered how, even for the good of the social state, any man could take it on himself to set so terrible a piece of mechanism going. Family life, after all, had its charms ; its responsi-

bilities were heavy ; he was not at all inclined to take them on himself ; but not the less he could not sympathize very heartily with Mr. Horton's lamentations, even when the boys were most incomprehensible, or Chubb most tyrannical—no, not even when the kitchen chimney caught fire exactly five minutes before dinner, and the cook soothed her over-ried nerves that same evening by helping herself to her master's choicest cognac, and so was found in a state of utter helplessness on the principal flight of stairs. These were trifling drawbacks, certainly, but a bachelor existence was not altogether free from some of them, as, now and then, even with his paragon of housekeepers, Mr. Hesketh had found to his cost.

He was so thoroughly happy, so thoroughly enjoyed his visit, that he incautiously told Mrs. Horton some of his altered

views respecting domestic felicity, and she seized her advantage directly. He was going to be a convert to her ideas as to marriage being the only state fit for civilized men to dwell in, and it was not too late for him to carry his opinions into practice. In a moment she had taken a bird's-eye view of every spinster and widow in the town, and found herself wishing that she had not mentally destined Miss Gwendoline for Dr. Langton, and done her very best to lead the two parties to think of each other,—she would have done so admirably for Mr. Hesketh. There was nobody else that would exactly suit at present, but some one would certainly be forthcoming, if only the gentleman could be kept in his present hopeful frame of mind.

“I am very glad to hear you say so,” she said; “it is what I have all along

thought. Men can't stand alone—women may; an old maid may pass through life pretty comfortably, but a man's lost without somebody to take care of him. I should be so glad if you could be brought to see how much better that nice house in Brunswick Square would be if it had a lady for its mistress instead of a house-keeper."

She meant what she said, thoroughly, as regarded the helplessness and pitiable condition of single men. She believed in it with all her heart. She liked very much helping women to husbands, but she enjoyed far more assisting men to wives. Poor creatures! she was full of pity for them. Miserable ciphers, lacking the unit which alone could give them any value in the social scale.

It was on the morning after Christmas-day that Mr. Hesketh had been weak enough

to own that a bachelor state was not the *summum bonum* of human felicity. He was sitting alone with his hostess in her pretty bright drawing-room, in the easiest arm-chair it held, his slippered feet upon a foot-stool, basking in the clear bright fire with as much content as the cat upon the rug. Letitia had gone out to take some hot-house flowers to Mr. Ross—Chubb's tribute to her that morning; Mr. Horton was in his study; the boys were skating on the pond outside the garden, and echoes of their voices came not unpleasantly into the room; Mrs. Horton was employed upon some pretty feminine handicraft, and with her bright little morning cap, her warm-coloured merino dress, presented a charming picture of matronly womanliness. Altogether, there was some excuse for Mr. Hesketh having been weak enough to make the admission that he had done. But he

had not the slightest intention of acting upon that admission—it was too late to alter the groove in which his life was running; and he had no desire that Mrs. Horton should be led into looking out for a wife for him, so he said with a calm *aplomb* that Talleyrand could not have surpassed—

“I can never put at the head of my house the mistress that only I should care to see there. My friend Horton’s life is as good a one as mine—better, an insurance office would say, and even if it were not, I couldn’t bring myself to wish him out of the world, even for the sake of being in my turn the happiest man in it.”

And, after that, Mrs. Horton, who wished for no more such compliments, thought it would be wisest to let Mr. Hesketh live out his bachelor career undisturbed by any efforts on her part to alter it.

She had planned to have him alone with her, however, because she wished to consult him respecting Letty. This was paying the highest compliment to his tact, delicacy, and general discretion that she could possibly do. She would not have paid it to any other man in the world, not even her husband. She always upheld Mr. Horton as a wife should uphold her lord: she had the highest respect for his talents and attainments as a geologist and antiquarian, but in matters of ordinary life, still more in matters of so tender a nature as those of which she was now about to speak, she would almost as soon have thought of consulting one of her sons as her husband. But it was quite a different thing with Mr. Hesketh. As she said herself, he was almost as good as a woman to talk to.

“I want to consult you,” she said, “about your ward—or our ward, I suppose I may

call her. Have you noticed anything particular about her since you have been here?"

"Nothing but a curate, and that is a thing too commonly in attendance upon young ladies, for it to be described as particular," said Mr. Hesketh, carelessly, but all the inward ease and comfort, the delicious *dolce far niente* in which he had been luxuriating, were gone. He might almost as well have been in his smoke-grimed office, with chairs and tables black with ink and age, as in the warm, bright drawing-room, redolent of comfort, and perfume, and women's presence. The cares of the world had come upon him even here, as he told himself they would come anywhere to any man who had undertaken the guardianship of a pretty young lady with a small fortune. He had spoken very lightly of that curate, but he had had his misgivings more

than once since Christmas-eve that he might be called upon to know more of the gentleman in question, and had wondered whether such further knowledge would lead him to regard Mr. Charles Rosslyn as his ward might desire.

"You mean Mr. Rosslyn," said Mrs. Horton, "but he's not a curate at present—in orders, however, and assistant master at King Henry's. Well, I wanted to speak to you about him and Letty. I think she is in love with him, and I know he is with her."

"Well?" said Mr. Hesketh. This was the conclusion he had arrived at six-and-thirty hours ago, but he wanted to know what inferences Mrs. Horton drew from it.

"Well! you know in that case matters can't stop as they are. Mr. Rosslyn has, I believe, absolutely nothing but his position, which of course is that of a gentleman.

He has resigned his situation as assistant master, and I really don't think he has anything else in view."

"But Letty and her fortune?"

"No, not even that," said Mrs. Horton, warmly; "it's just the fortune that stands in the way. It is possible he might propose if it were not for that, but I believe, while he considers all the advantages to be on the lady's side, he'll break his heart and hers before he'll say a word."

"The very best thing for him to do under the circumstances. I don't believe in broken hearts, but I do in the meanness and dishonour of a man's marrying a woman that she may have the pleasure of keeping him," said Mr. Hesketh, gravely.

"But it wouldn't be so in this case; he has no right to look at it in that light; neither have you." And then Mrs. Horton proceeded to unfold the little scheme which

she had formed for the lovers' future, which could never now be realised, seeing that Mr. Rosslyn was too obstinate to propose, and so let matters be placed as she would have had them.

"But what can I do in the matter, my dear lady?" said Mr. Hesketh, "you don't want me to go and tell him all these little plans of yours in his behalf."

"You might do something," said Mrs. Horton, warmly. "I think when two young people are fond of one another, and in all respects suitable to, and deserving of each other, it's the positive duty of those connected with them to try and make matters easy for them. Money isn't everything; if it were, with a very little encouragement, Letitia might have an offer from Dr. Langton."

"She isn't cut out for a schoolmistress," said Mr. Hesketh; "she'd give the boys

twice as much treacle as they ought to have in their puddings, and a great deal more butter on their bread than was good for them."

"She wouldn't have to see to such matters, if she married Dr. Langton," said Mrs. Horton ; "his position is excellent, and so is his income. He has no need to take boarders to increase it. Whoever marries him will lead just the life of any other lady ; I only wish that he was twenty years younger, a little better looking, not quite so reserved in his manners, and that Letty could be brought to like him."

"In short, if you could turn him into Charles Rosslyn ?"

"Well, yes, something like that ; but as I can't, I mean the Doctor for Gwendoline Layne. That's why I asked them both, yesterday. I think they got on very well together. The Doctor must be made to see

that he cannot have Letty and can have Miss Layne ; it will be such a good thing for them both. I shall be quite pleased if I can settle that nicely ; I considered it over for some time, and amongst all the ladies I know, I could find none so suitable as Miss Layne for Dr. Langton. It requires a little judgment to bring the right people together in these cases."

Mr. Hesketh devoutly hoped that she would never find the right person for him. It might be pleasanter now if he had married twenty years ago, but to have a bride selected for him, as if he were a tame canary, for whom an eligible hen goldfinch was to be found as a mate, was a different matter. Mrs. Horton continued :

"But never mind the Doctor and Miss Layne ; they can wait. What I want you to do is to try and help these poor, silly young creatures. Mr. Rosslyn is very

clever. Isn't there any opening for him ? if you don't know of anybody with a living to bestow, which of course is what one would like best of all, can't you push him in other matters. Wouldn't he do at the bar ? Couldn't you get him a place under Government ? You know so many people ; in one way or another, surely you could help him."

"He might do at the bar well enough to be able to keep a wife in twenty years' time, if he has enough to keep himself till then ; as to a place under Government, I haven't interest enough to procure him a postman's. You see it is not the easiest thing in the world to find employment for a young man of five-and-twenty, with gentlemanly tastes and habits, of a kind that he will accept, or that will enable him to maintain a wife in the position of a lady. If I were to offer him a place in my office,

it's a chance if he wouldn't feel affronted, and I doubt whether he'd be worth a pound a week if I did. The probabilities are against his writing a hand that any one can read. I wonder if he knows how to spell English : I suppose he must, though, if he has had to teach the boys."

Mrs. Horton looked vexed : "I asked you to help me, and you are throwing all the difficulties you can in my way. Don't assist me if you are not disposed ; but, at least, don't speak of any one in whom I feel interested as you are doing now."

"Well, but the *morale* of the thing. You ask me, a prudent guardian, bound to look after my ward's interests, to do my best to promote her marriage with a gentleman who has neither a penny nor a prospect of earning one. If I were not speaking to a lady, to whom such a question would be irreverence, I would ask if

this was not rather an unreasonable thing which was required of me."

"I don't ask anything of the kind. I ask you to give the gentleman in question the chance of earning a great many pennies. It is I that am acting prudently. It is I that am thinking of Letty's best interests when I ask you to consult her happiness by removing the one impediment to a match that would otherwise be every way desirable. Don't you see it? She likes Charles Rosslyn. He has everything but money; can't you put him in the way of supplying his one deficiency?"

"I don't know, I'm sure: I have only seen the young gentleman once, and I really hardly know what his capabilities are. Dare I ask for a little time to judge of them before I pronounce in what career he is most likely to distinguish himself? whether in the bar, the counting-house, or

as the preacher of a fashionable proprietary chapel. I should think he would do in the latter, only his hands are hardly white enough. But, seriously, let me see what I can of this young fellow before I leave, and then I will tell you whether I can do anything for him—whether he is one of those who may be helped on their road up hill, or merely one of the dead weights whom only a Hercules can drag half way. And if you possibly can help it, my dear lady, don't let these foolish young people enter into an engagement before I have had time to ascertain whether you and I shall not forget every claim to prudence and common sense by allowing them to do so. I think I'll go out now. I hear my friend Horton on the stairs. His boys, as usual, seem too much for him; he's giving them his customary paternal benediction."

And Mr. Hesketh went out, feeling that

all the delicious rest and careless *abandon* of his holiday had departed. If he had married twenty years ago, could he have been in a worse plight than now, with a ward who gave him all the responsibilities of a father, but over whom he could not exercise the authority, nor for whom entertain the affection of one? He had been asked to sanction what in his heart he felt to be a very foolish and imprudent thing, and he should have to watch a young man in whom he really felt not the slightest interest, learn what he could of him, and, if the result were unfavourable, be stigmatized as a brute and a bear—he knew something of a lady's vocabulary when exasperated—because he could not see capabilities in him of which he might be altogether devoid.

And at the best, what could he hope for, even if Mr. Rosslyn were as talented

as Mrs. Horton believed him to be—a very doubtful matter in his opinion—but a great deal of trouble for which possibly there might be no return whatever? If he failed, his good intentions would not be taken into account, and if he succeeded, he would be considered as having merely fulfilled his duty as guardian to the young lady, by aiding and abetting her in what he could not help feeling was something very like throwing herself away. His ward was certainly a very charming girl, but he could not help wishing that her guardianship had been inflicted upon any one but himself.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DOCTOR DANGEROUS.

DR. LANGTON was in an evil frame of mind that morning. Letty had been preoccupied and absent all Christmas Day. She had smiled upon him sweetly and graciously it was true, but then she had smiled just as sweetly and graciously upon Mr. Hesketh. He did not like Miss Layne, by whom he had sat at dinner ; she was thin, sharp-nosed, and chattered—and the Doctor hated chattering women. Letty's soft liquid tones were like music to his critical ear, but Miss Layne's voice was

full of false notes and discords. He had not the slightest idea of Mrs. Horton's intentions respecting himself and the lady.

It would have been impossible for him to think that any one could have dared to settle his future, and select his bride for him. Even had he been told of Mrs. Horton's audacity he would not have believed it,—it would have been simply incredible. But he did not like Miss Layne, and he did like Letty, and it was a bore to be obliged to sit opposite the one all dinner-time, and not be able to catch her eye, or hear her once address him, and to have Miss Layne pouring that incessant hail storm of small talk into his disgusted ears. He had heard sundry allusions to a Mr. Ross, and at last, upon putting a question or two to Mrs. Horton, had elicited an account of the manner in which he had first come under her notice, and in-

deed his whole story as far as she knew it.

She was rather glad of an opportunity of telling it. She knew very little really of the Doctor, or she would never have dreamed of finding a wife for him. She was a charming woman, and in her way as clever as she was charming ; but Dr. Langton was not a man to be influenced in any manner. He had set every atom of heart that he had upon Letitia Lisdale, and if he could not have her he would remain to the end of his days a bachelor, and condemn every woman for her sweet sake. She knew that he was dry and rather disagreeable, stiff, and a little stilted—Mr. Hesketh had told her that it was the nature of a Don to be so ; the man was too often buried beneath his learning—but still she thought that there might be something under all the Greek and Latin to

which she might appeal in behalf of this poor stranger—strange apparently in the saddest way of all, amongst the people that spoke his own tongue, and the land that had given him birth.

It might be that the Doctor would be able to give him employment at the school. She had heard that the French master, who also taught German, was not to return after the Christmas vacation, and it was possible that Mr. Ross might prefer teaching Continental languages in England, to giving instruction in his own, abroad. He would not be strong enough to travel in the spring—his medical man had told her so in confidence, though he was afraid as yet to dishearten his patient by over-candour—but he might teach here. She did not know his means, but she fancied he would be glad to supplement them in this way, and so it happened that she found herself tell-

ing Mr. Ross's story to the Doctor; the manner in which he had been found, half killed by the elements at their very gates, his sufferings, his requirements, his present habitation, with all the graphic skill and pathos which she could command.

The Doctor was very little moved by the picture of the sufferings of this Mr. Ross, whom he guessed to be Hartley Rosslyn. He was a fool to have come here at all, and having come, let him bear the consequences of his folly. He had no personal fear as to any disclosures affecting himself, which, in the event of his detection, Hartley Rosslyn might make. He had been so long secure in his pride of place, in his impassible sternness, that the possibility that anything uttered by such a one as Hartley Rosslyn had now become, should hurt him, never presented itself to him. He had no fear for himself, he was utterly unassailable,

but it did occur to him before long, that the fact of Charles Rosslyn's father being here—nay, his very existence—might have an unpleasant influence on the future career of his late assistant master.

It was an evil thought, and at first he tried to put it from him; but it would come—would make itself heard. If Mrs. Horton knew that the father of the gentleman she admitted on such intimate terms into her household was in hiding for fear lest the law's strong hand should claim him as a felon, would she welcome him quite as cordially as she did now? Would Miss Lisdale marry a man over whose head hung the possibility that he might see his nearest of kin standing in the prisoners' dock? The Doctor knew that young ladies, and ladies no longer young, might forgive a man his poverty, if he had the position of a gentleman and

was well connected, but he felt inclined to think that their prejudices would be too strong to allow them to overlook such an indelible stain as this. Talk of the bar sinister—what would even that be to the felon's brand! Would Miss Lisdale ever suffer her dainty skirts to come in contact with a man so disgraced?

For a little while he tried to cheat himself into the thought that it was only right that Mrs. Horton should know a little more of the man whom she allowed to come so freely in contact with her ward. It was a duty he owed her in return for the kindness and hospitality she had extended to him. Mr. Charles Rosslyn's position as master in King Henry's School had necessarily been to some extent a guarantee, in her eyes, of his position. It was right she should know how precarious that position was. Then he waxed wrath

with himself for such jugglery. He was a hard man, and with perhaps as little amiability in him as any man well could have; but still, to some extent, he was honest, and he could not cheat himself in this matter. He hated, with a mad hatred, this young fool, with his bright, handsome face, who had come between him and the desire of his heart, and at any cost, if need be, he would put him from his path. *That* was why he would go and tell Mrs. Horton that there was a possibility of such disgrace and shame hanging over him that she would do well never to allow him to re-enter her house. *That* was why the girl who had hung upon his words, and brightened at his smile, should learn that he was unworthy of her presence—that there was a barrier between them which no idle, girlish liking could be allowed to bridge over—which no love-sick

romance could charm away—stern, hard, impassable—not in this life to be done away with, not in this generation to be over-leaped, let her try as she would ; and if he judged Miss Lisdale right—if she was indeed the woman that he thought her she would *not* so try. In his eyes she owed half her charm to the slight tincture of conventionalism which the Cathedral Close perhaps had implanted in her real nature. She was the loveliest girl he had ever seen, but if she had been one atom less a trained and perfectly mannered gentlewoman, with her culture and refinement bearing the stamp, for all their easy grace, of an artificial state of things, would he ever have cared for her as he did ? This wild, mad love of his was the one outbreak of the inner man's fierce nature, which for five-and-twenty years had been encrusted over and bound down by formulas and rules,

and a life as artificial and unhealthy as any monk's ; and yet even in this outbreak the five-and-twenty years of artificial existence would make themselves felt, and prevent his loving any woman but one who would come up to the standard that would be required by the circles in which he had mixed at Oxbridge, or the society to which he hoped to introduce her in the neighbourhood of St. Ewald's. Miss Lisdale could hold her own well enough anywhere, and a woman who could hold her own would be the last to bring social ostracism upon herself by linking her fate with that of a man who at any moment might be placed under a ban that would be irremovable.

This was what Cyril Langton said to himself. At any rate, he didn't palter with the matter. He was going to take an unfair advantage of a rival—do a thing that perhaps gentlemen and men of honour,

if they looked at it in all its bearings, would say he had no right to do; but, right or wrong—fair or not—he *would* do it. To win this woman for himself seemed now the one great venture of his life, and if Charles Rosslyn had come in his way, and he had a chance of spurning him from it, should he not be the veriest fool that ever breathed if he did not so spurn him?

But, at any rate, he would make quite sure, before he spoke, that Mr. Ross was Hartley Rosslyn. It was as well to know how near was his rival's danger—whether he himself was aware of it—and, if the worst came to the worst, and if nothing else would do, but fixing the brand on him with his own hands—why then, to know how, and where, to do so most securely. If possible, he would refrain from that. Hartley Rosslyn had been of his own order after all; it would seem another matter

altogether telling Glynne how he could at last find the victim for his revenge, to what it had been letting the constables know where they should find the vagrant who had broken prison. And he should not care for any open scandal to attach itself to a late master of King Henry's School. But it was not likely that there would be any occasion to proceed so far. He thought he knew both Mrs. Horton and Miss Lisdale quite well enough for that.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE SINNER.

HARTLEY ROSSLYN was sitting alone in Mrs. Payne's little parlour waiting for Grace. She had promised to come that day, and read to him, and the time seemed very long till she came. His Christmas had been but a sad one, though Mrs. Payne had dined with him, and after dinner entertained him with reminiscences of her departed husband, the late Reverend Theophilus. Anne Cundleigh and her father had gone to dinner at the house of one of the leading members of

the congregation, and in the morning there had been service at the old chapel, where Gordon Cundleigh had preached to about a dozen auditors, so that, except for a brief visit at ten o'clock in the morning from Anne, Hartley Rosslyn had seen nothing of his neighbours. Then, being a man blessed, or cursed, with a lively imagination, he had sat at home all the morning hours, while Mrs. Payne was away at church, picturing the different groups that that day would bring together in God's House, and saw by pleasant firesides children gathering round their grand-parents' knees, sons and brothers meeting round the family hearth again, mothers gathering their own once more beneath their wings, fathers looking proudly on the boys home from school or college—so that all the life that he could have loved so well, and from which his own act had shut him out, came before his mental

vision that long, dull Christmas morning, as he sat alone, and in the still longer, duller Christmas evening, when Mrs. Payne, in her well-preserved silk dress, sat before him with her album on her lap, expatiating on the merits of half-a-dozen different portraits of the late Reverend Theophilus which figured there.

It had been so unlike the Christmas of many years ago, with the hearty plenty and merriment that had pervaded the Grange. He wondered very often how they were spending their Christmas there. He pictured his brother at the head of his table, looking and speaking much as their father had done before him. He wondered how the old house would look with its Christmas garniture of holly. Was the old tree still standing that always gave them berries if no other did? Was it from that that those bright boughs had come which Grace

had sent him? Did his brother think of him at all when he sat down on Christmas night by the hearth from which he must ever be shut out?

He was not a stranger in a foreign land. He was something infinitely more pitiable, a stranger in his own. When he had been living among those who spoke another tongue, had other customs, and another creed than his, he had not felt one half so desolate as now, when the church bells were ringing to gather men together to utter the prayers with which he had been familiar as a child, when the bright berries and green leaves that decorated the room in which he sat came from the lands that had been his father's, when not far off his son and his brother were to sit down and break bread together beneath the roof under which he had been born.

He had brought it all upon himself. Pos-

sibly ; but it was not less hard to bear. He accepted his punishment without any rancour or bitterness against those who meted it. He had sinned against laws imposed for the well being and due order of society, and he must reap the consequences. Glynne was very hard. The old man might have learned mercy by this time, but he misjudged him through his partiality to his own son. He misjudged him altogether there ; *he* had never led young Glynne into those wild courses which had brought on his early death ; he smiled faintly even now as he thought of the possibility of any one *leading* young Glynne wrong. But his father did not know him as Hartley did, and he was one of those fathers who never seem to realize the full fact of their paternity till death claims his share in their offspring. Mr. Glynne had not been the most loving parent in his son's lifetime.

It seemed as if by this long, deep rooted, untiring vengeance on the man who he believed had first taught that son's feet to walk in crooked paths, he thought to make him some amends even after his death.

Hartley Rosslyn felt that he had done a sinful and a foolish thing in his youth, and that he must now reap its bitter fruits. He did not murmur ; as he had sown so he must reap ; only, if he had been a penitent of the old Roman Church, could any of its priests have devised a harder penance than that which he endured every time he saw his son, and dared not, like Jacob of old, fling himself upon his neck and cry, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face ; because thou art yet alive."

He was sitting by the fire thinking wistfully of all this when Mrs. Payne's one little maid announced a visitor: "a gentleman, sir, who won't give his name."

And just as the wild hope came thrilling his poor heart that it might be his brother come to say he *could* not let the Christmas season pass without coming to wish him God speed, Dr. Langton entered: tall, stiff, grave, erect, and repellent as ever.]

He had come with no kindly Christmas greeting; that was clear enough the moment he entered the room, and half-bowed stiffly and gravely to the slight wasted figure with the pale worn face, seated in Mrs. Payne's easiest chair by the fireside. He had asked for Mr. Ross, and, as he had expected, he saw Hartley Rosslyn. He waited till the little maid had left the room, and then taking the chair which she had placed for him, said, without replying to the low tremulous good-morning with which he had been greeted :

"Are you quite wise in remaining here?"

"I am under another name; I am so in-

firm as to be unable to leave the house but for the garden, or for the one adjoining. I see very few, and those only who but know me as a stranger thrown in his helplessness and illness on their mercy."

"But even these will speak of you ; and your very friendlessness, the singularity that any one without family ties to draw him to an old-world place like this, with no local interests or attractions to bring him hither, should be passing through it, is of itself enough to excite attention, and attention is just the very thing that of all others you should avoid. I recognized you from the description Mrs. Horton gave me. Is it not possible that even with all the changes five-and-twenty years have brought, some one else, with suspicions excited by the peculiar circumstances surrounding you, may do so too ?"

That was not a danger Hartley Rosslyn

had contemplated. He had left St. Ewald's a young, gay, gallant man, without a blight on his name or a cloud on his future. He had returned to it worn, and old, and weak, changed so much every way that he had wondered if any one could recognise him. Morally and physically he had suffered a martyrdom the last three months, but at least he had been spared the dread of detection, and now it seemed not impossible that he might bring that disgrace and shame upon his brother and his son. He looked with a woeful helplessness at the Doctor. Can you fancy the glance a hare might give that had broken one of its limbs and was lying prone and wounded by the hedge-side, as it heard the hounds' baying growing nearer and nearer? If you can, picture Hartly Rosslyn's eyes as he turned them on his once familiar friend, who had come to warn, but in whose eyes there was no sign of either aid or pity.

"I had not thought of that," he said feebly; "I am so helpless now—almost a cripple. I had intended to stay here till the spring, by which time I hoped to regain the use of my limbs, and then go back unnoted as I came. It is almost a physical impossibility for me to leave now. Still, I might, perhaps, get as far as Cheltenham, if that would answer the purpose."

He looked wistfully at the Doctor in the hopes of a little counsel, but the Doctor was only thinking how much he had aged, and congratulating himself upon his own superiority in that respect. Hartley Rosslyn continued with a little querulous feebleness—

"I will go there or to some other watering-place if you think it better, but the effort would be very great. Would it not be possible, do you think, for me to stop here with safety?"

If Cyril Langton was driven to do his worst,—if, indeed, it might be necessary to give a hint to Mr. Glynne where he should find the man to whom he ascribed his son's ruin, why, then it would be indeed better that Hartley Rosslyn should stay here. He hoped that he should not have to do this thing; if possible he would not, but if need were that it must be done, why, let it be done as securely and easily as possible. Looking on the man before him with his white hands and refined bearing, he felt that it would not be pleasant for him to do so. The Rosslyns were as old as the Langtons, and this one, before he committed himself to that irretrievable folly of his, had been a good classical scholar and won some credit at Oxbridge; only, the very fact of his *being* here might not be without its influence on Mrs. Horton. After a pause he said—

“I think you might venture to stop here. Your moving in your present condition would excite the very remarks it is most desirable for you to avoid. May I ask if you have made Mr. Charles Rosslyn acquainted with the position in which he stands towards you?”

“No; why should I shadow him with a disgrace that it is past his power to avert? And yet—and yet—oh, Langton! can’t you imagine what it must be to have to meet him as a stranger? It was only an accident that brought us together at first,” he added, as if trying to exculpate himself from having sought his son, “and he is very kind—so kind to me, a stranger, for whom he can feel only pity, that it is easy to imagine what he might be to a father who had a right to his love.”

The tears came in Hartley Rosslyn’s eyes as he spoke, and he looked at the Doctor as

if to find some response to his feelings in him, but Cyril Langton's face was stony and impassive. You would have thought that if ever he had held a child in his arms it must have been so long ago that he had now forgotten everything about it; and yet Hartley Rosslyn, who, when his grown-up son first took his hand, seemed again to feel the touch of warm velvety baby fingers round his own, wondered how such forgetfulness could be possible.

These two men had been good friends in their wild, early days, but every succeeding year of the last five-and-twenty had set them further and further apart. Was it all the fault of the poor sinner and outcast who sat cowering in his chair by the fire, or was Cyril Langton so much the better man for all the years of study and scholarship that he had spent, and the life of impeccable decorum which he had led? If

they had never grasped hands in fellowship, never stood side by side at the starting-post with life's race before them, never known of each other's follies, loves, hopes, aspirations, could they have been further apart from, or more utterly incomprehensible to, each other? Since he had made shipwreck of his own life and seen how nearly others had gone down with him, Hartley Rosslyn's daily cry had been, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner!" And he had been pitiful and tender to the short-comings of others to a degree that was almost weakness. In all his life had Cyril Langton ever felt the need of mercy to himself, or extended it to another?

CHAPTER XIII.

ONCE THEY WERE FRIENDS.

MRS. PAYNE had not been at home when Dr. Langton called on her lodger, which was so far fortunate that his doing so would avoid causing a world of comment on her part. The Doctor was certainly the most unpopular person in all St. Ewald's, but at the same time, perhaps, the one held in the most respectful consideration ; and, if Mrs. Payne had seen him, every one favoured with her acquaintance would have known before the week was out the honour the Doctor had done her. As it was,

her little maid being ignorant of his person, and not having been entrusted with his name, Mrs. Payne knew nothing on her return home, but the fact that a gentleman had been to see Mr. Ross ; and having satisfied herself that it was *not* Mr. Cundleigh who had had the impertinence during her absence to invade her domicile, she concluded that it must be the visitor staying at Fairleigh House, or that Mr. Horton himself for the first time had ventured so far.

She thought a little better of her lodger for the compliment she imagined had been paid him. Sometimes his utter friendlessness and loneliness had disposed her to be rather more curious than was advisable about him. He paid regularly and gave very little trouble, but this would not have been enough for Mrs. Payne had it not been for the fact of Mrs. Horton's interest in him.

"And after all," as she said, when in a doubtful mood, "the Hortons themselves were new in St. Ewald's." A visit from Dr. Langton would have raised Mr. Ross immeasurably in her estimation.

But that same afternoon he had a visitor of a different description. Dick Girling called with a note and a basket of fruit from Miss Rosslyn. The little maid was out for a half-holiday, and Mrs. Payne's dignity was rather ruffled by having to open the door to him herself. She bade him wipe his feet and go into the front parlour, where he would find Mr. Ross, and then went into her own little sanctum and resumed her knitting, wondering why Miss Rosslyn did not persuade her father to keep her a groom, or at least a page, instead of having to employ a creature who looked as if he had just been taken from the plough tail, to carry her messages.

Richard Girling was looking a little better than when he left the prison. Grace had not contented herself with persuading her father to employ him, but manifested her interest in him in other ways. She had persuaded Nurse Stokes to find some of her father's old linen for him, she had spoken kindly to him whenever he came in her way, offered to lend him books—she had a few cheap ones, purchased under Mr. Cundleigh's direction, which she kept for such purposes—and been met by the answer that he was unable to read. Then she shocked Nurse Stokes, and astonished Dick Girling as much as it was possible for him to be astonished, by volunteering to teach him, and desired him to come every evening and she would give him a lesson in the best kitchen, as the one was called where Nurse Stokes mostly sat, kept her stores, and mended the house-linen, while Deb

and Jane, and the boys who helped both in house and farm, sat in the stone-paved one at the rear. Nurse grumbled, and complained to her master, of this invasion of her domain, but John Rosslyn said :

“Don’t cross the child, Nurse, it’s not worth while, let her have her way.”

Which she had just now, a great deal more than was good for her, according to Nurse Stokes, for at this time John Rosslyn was very pitiful to his girl, to whom he had found it impossible to give her way in just the one thing that she would most have cared for.

Dick came two or three evenings into the kitchen, and then found more congenial amusement at the beer-shop. Grace was discouraged but not angry with him. She told of her experiment and its apparent failure to Mrs. Horton and Letty, and they

took Nurse Stokes's view of the matter, only expressing themselves in milder language.

"This is not fit work for you to do, my dear," said Mrs. Horton, gravely. "Better speak about this man to your clergyman."

"That's no use," said Grace, energetically. "All that Mr. Trevor will do will be to talk to Dick about saving his soul. Now *I* wanted to teach him that he'd got a soul to be saved, and it is my belief that Dick hasn't the slightest notion that he has such a thing belonging to him."

The man's utter ignorance, his dense, low, stolid, brute-like stupidity, behind which the girl's eyes failed to see the lower and yet more brute-like cunning he shared in common with the animals, made her only the more interested in him. He was only one out of so many thousands, a type of that large mass of suffering down-

trodden human kind, out of which the wheels of our civilization seems to crush all but the coarsest instincts. *That* was why she pitied him. Hunger? poverty?—well, these might be hard to bear, but Grace felt that for herself the direst thing of all would have been the robbing the soul within her of its rightful food—killing it before it knew that it had life, depriving it not only of sustenance, but of the very wish for nourishment, sending it blind, deaf, dumb, into the glorious universe where all the part it had to play was just to animate the horny-handed, heavy-shouldered machine of flesh and blood, for which as yet no substitute of steel and iron had been found. Richard Girling, according to her, had been wronged, and his wrong was all the greater because he was not aware of it himself. She felt it for him—passionately, bitterly, and would have

tried, if he would have only let her, to give him eyes to see something more of the world in which he lived, than just that it held fields for him to plough, and corn to reap. She would have wished him to have had ears for other things than the oaths and jests of his comrades, and she would have liked to give him other utterances than just the few hundred words which generally comprise the vocabulary of our peasantry. And all this she would have wished to do, not merely for his sake, but for her own. It was intolerable to her to sit still with folded hands, and do nothing to help a creature whose ruined, dwarfed existence seemed a standing reproach to her, as to every one to whom the light and the knowledge had been given which seemed so cruelly denied to him.

If there was a wrong anywhere Grace felt as if it was laid upon her to right it.

It only made matters worse when Nurse Stokes told her Dick was only a little more thick-headed than the rest of her father's labourers. Grace said if that were so, she would teach them all; and Nurse Stokes set her down as "cracked wi' too much learning herself." But if they would have come she would have done it,—only they were like Dick, and had other solaces for their evening hours than any they would find from Grace's teachings. But still the girl did not blame them.

"There is something very wrong somewhere," she said, "but I don't think it lies with these poor fellows." And then she perplexed Letty for an hour with questions as to whose door the sin lay at, and how it was that creatures like Richard Girling, whom it would be a sheer compliment to call a Pagan, were allowed to exist at all. "It isn't Dick alone that's a trouble to me," she

said, "but why are there so many like Dick in the world?"

"The poor shall ye always have with you," said Letty.

"Yes, but I don't see why they need be so much worse than poor, as Dick Girling is," said Grace. "I shall ask Mr. Cundleigh about it all, to-morrow; I always go to him when I am troubled with such matters."

Still Dick looked a little the better for her interest in him. He was clean and well-fed, and had had his jacket mended. He wiped his feet carefully when Mrs. Payne bade him, and then went into the parlour where Hartley Rosslyn sat leaning over the fire, and seeing pictures in the coals. Dick stepped heavily, but he did not hear him till the other set the basket of fruit down with such emphasis on the small Pembroke table in the middle of the

room that Mr. Rosslyn looked up with a start.

Something in the face he saw surprised him even more than the unexpected presence of Dick Girling. It might be that those pictures in the coals he had been conjuring up had predisposed him to see once familiar traits and lineaments in the first features that met his gaze when he turned from them, or was there indeed a likeness between his visitor of that morning, the first classical scholar in the kingdom, the man bowed down by his own weight of learning, and whose coat and conduct were alike unimpeachable, and Dick Girling, who had long forgotten his alphabet, had once broken prison, and but a week ago been discharged from it?

He looked again—well, the eyes were not unlike—it was no fancy, the shape of the forehead, and the eyebrows were the

same ; only the mouth was different. Dick's was thicker-lipped, and not so wide as that of the gentleman to whom Hartley Rosslyn honoured him by tracing a resemblance ; but, after all, there was some similarity in the expression — Dick's was dogged and sullen, the mouth of a man who could not say much, even if he wished ; the Doctor's was refined into firmness, a reticent, perhaps obstinate, little speaking mouth—that of a man who *could* say a great deal, but who found few people on whom to waste his words ; and yet had ignorance and learning somehow brought two mouths that were originally rather unlike, to have something of a resemblance to each other ? These two very different agents had, perhaps, had the same effect upon the figure ; or had they been born each with that stoop in shoulders that were almost equally broad ? Richard Girling's might have been

contracted through hard labour, and the Doctor's through long bending over intricate passages in his favourite authors ; but the effect was the same—scholar and dullard, gentleman and clown, the figures were as nearly alike as those of two men with more than twenty years' difference between their ages could be.

Hartley Rosslyn recovered himself presently.

“Miss Grace Rosslyn ha' sent me wi' this basket and letter. I'se got to stop for an answer,” said Dick, handing the note to Hartley Rosslyn. As he did so, the button of his shirt—it was an old one of John Rosslyn's—gave way, and showed a scar of a circular shape, and which must have been caused by a hurt or burn originally. It was a muscular, hairy arm, and generally this scar was imperceptible through the dirt that covered it ; but Dick was clean,

for once—Grace had insisted that he should present himself before her, well washed, before she employed him as her messenger.

“How did you get that hurt?” asked Hartley Rosslyn, abruptly.

“Fell agin the hot bars, when I was a kid not tew years oud, I’ve heerd mother say. ’Tont never come out; the man she was married tew said my father ort to know his own agin if ever he come across me.”

“Then her husband was not your father?”

“I was a chance child, I reckon; a’most half on ’em was, our way,” said Mr. Girling, in whose estimation the bar sinister was evidently of very little importance.

“That must have been a bad hurt for the scar to have remained so long—why, it must be above twenty years since it took place, by what you say of your age at the time.”

"I was five-and-twenty, last Michaelmas," said Dick.

"Is your mother living?"

"No ; she died sixteen year ago. I a' got my livin' as I could since then ; for the matter o' that I'd done it years afore ; I skeared crows when I was seven years oud, and picked up stones when my fingers would 'ardly 'owd them. I'd no call to be kept by Jack Girling, so I sune left him, an' went my own ways by myself."

"Jack Girling—that was the name of your mother's husband ? Then I suppose you took it ?"

"Or they gi'en it me ; I don't know t' matter much. I a' heard say my mother's name was Ann Crane."

"And your own father ?"

"Never knew nothin' about him, an' never want tew. If he di'n't care for me, what should I care for he ? If he ever

want to find me out, here's the mark for't I reckon—but folks don't want to be bothered about them sort o' children, as why should they? There's nuthin tew force 'em tew."

"Did your mother die far from here?"

"Little Ashmudham, all amongst the marshes, a rare place to catch the agur; but sum of her own folks was there: I can recollect her aunt—granny, I called her—she died when I was on'y seven year owd."

"And Jack Girling, your mother's husband?"

"Went off to Canedy with his daughter Anna, eight year ago. He might ha' let me gone with him if I could ha' paid for myself, but where was the good o' that? I might just as well work 'ard here as over there, 'an I reckon 'ard work's all I shall ever get go where I will, an' I don't believe

the beer 'll be better o' that side the water than this."

Work and beer ; that seemed all he had come into the world for. Perhaps he was astute enough to have uttered the last words as a hint to Mr. Rosslyn, for he looked a little disappointed when he found that the other opened the note, and having read it, drew his desk towards him, and wrote a few words by way of answer. It was only an intimation on Grace's part that her cousin had lent her that volume of De Quincey of which she had been speaking to Mr. Rosslyn, and she would come to-morrow for a couple of hours and read it to him, if that suited his convenience. He wrote to her to come, gave the note to her messenger, and then, for the first time understanding the increased sullenness of a face that had brightened momentarily while speaking to him, accompanied the

note with a shilling. Dick took it as civilly as he knew how, and went off, feeling himself well repaid for his unusual loquacity, muttering as he went, "Naow t'other letter, and then for t' school-master."

Then Hartley Rosslyn leant over the fire again, and Dick Girling's face presented itself there with an indomitable obstinacy, characteristic of the individual. Only it was hardly Dick's face now—but something like it, rounder, softer, pulpier—Dick's face as it might have been ere he had grown into that very equivocal type of manhood which he now presented. Dick, a sturdy, chubby urchin not two years old, with a young father holding him in his arms, and inveighing to a friend of his own age, on the carelessness of the nurse-girl who had let the child fall against the bars of the grate and burn his arm so terribly.

Hartley Rosslyn remembered a scene like this in which he himself had been one actor, and Cyril Langton the other.

Dr. Langton once had been, for him, wonderfully fond of that sturdy brat of his, whose existence he was obliged to conceal so jealously, from both the college authorities and his own friends. He had rated the servant furiously for the accident, and shown the wound to Hartley Rosslyn, wondering at the time what the mother would say when she came back and found the hurt. Ann Crane—that was the name of the child's mother—he remembered her well—a tall comely housemaid in the service of Mrs. Langton—he remembered, too, some comments amongst the family on the name of the place from whence she came, and sundry speculations as to the origin of the word; then Ann left for London, as Mrs. Langton believed, and

was heard of no more till Hartley Rosslyn saw her in a little cottage ten miles from Oxbridge, with a red-cheeked, dark-haired baby in her arms, that Cyril Langton, with a smile and a shrug, claimed as his.

It was all a pitiful story of folly, and weakness, and sin. His own might have been exactly similar had it not been for that innate weakness of his which would not let him wrong the woman, however confiding, who trusted him. He took no credit to himself for that. It was not, he thought, that he had been a better man than his friend, but he *could* not act as he had acted. He had gone wrong in many ways, but in that one perhaps his very weakness kept him right.

And this was what it had come to then. This clod might, if he knew all, call Cyril Langton father. And the great scholar was going his way profoundly unconscious

of the semi-bovine existence which *had* sprung from his. Ought he not to know of it? Ought he not to know to what the creature who owed him life had sunk? Hartley Rosslyn was not sure. Would he thank him for telling him to what the avoidance of all his responsibilities had brought the being to whom he surely owed some? But was he the only one to be considered? Had not this creature some claim in common humanity, that at least a helping hand, even if it were never known to be a father's, should be extended to lift him from the darkness in which he dwelt. He remembered now Grace telling him two days ago of one of her father's labourers, who must be this very Richard Girling. She said: "He has been robbed of his rights as a human being." Surely, late as it was in the day, his father might help him to obtain those; even if he chose that

other rights should be for ever unacknowledged. All these years had hardened him, but still he would surely admit that this poor wretch had some claims on his kindness, if not on his affection. But he would take a little trouble, first, to complete the links in the chain of evidence which seemed to connect Baby Dicken of the past with Richard Girling of the present. Something told him that that chain must be very complete and firm indeed, before he could hope that any appeal to the sympathies of Cyril Langton for his unowned son, would be of the slightest service.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DOCTOR'S WINDOWS.

THERE was a little stir of rather a pleasurable kind in St. Ewald's the next morning, when it was rumoured that every window, and almost every pane in them, of that part of the school-house of King Henry's which formed Dr. Langton's residence, had been broken the preceding night. The Doctor not being popular, and the minor repairs, such as those of window-glass, of this part of the building falling upon the master of the school, it was clear that this damage had been inflicted by some one to gratify a little personal animus against

him. Of course the boys were the first thought of. But then as, to reach the lower windows, it would have been necessary to climb over the garden-wall ten feet high, it was not very easy to see how boys, however resolved upon mischief, could have done so. As to the school itself not having been attacked, that might arise from its more exposed situation, it being so close to the high road that it would have been impossible for any one to throw a shower of missiles at its windows without running great risk of being detected ; while, once the old stone wall *was* fairly climbed, one brisk shower of stones from the gravel paths would do all the mischief necessary, and the invader could escape even more quickly than he came, by the help of the ivy which grew thick and strong against the inner wall. No, the boys could not have done it ; as Launce Horton declared,

“they might be cads enough, but they hadn’t the pluck.” He had all the contempt for his schoolfellows that a London-bred boy thinks it right to entertain for the provincials of his own age ; but he did not debit them with this piece of mischief. He inquired a little anxiously, upon whom the expense of mending the windows was likely to fall, and having been told that the Doctor would be the sufferer, was observed for the rest of the day to be in an unusually cheerful frame of mind.

Before noon, however, the public anxiety was set at rest as to the possible guilt of the Grammar School boys by the Doctor’s appearance at the Petty Sessions sitting that day in the Town Hall, and the version he gave the magistrates of the manner in which his windows had been broken. He was sitting in his study at ten o’clock the preceding evening, with the shutters still

unclosed, but the blinds drawn down, and the lamp so situated that, as he remembered afterwards, the shadow of his head must have been visible on the window-blinds, when he was startled by a violent shower of stones against the window. One struck his shoulder—it was a sharp flint, and might have hurt him seriously had he not been protected by his clothing. He produced the flint, and it made rather a sensation in the court. He went to the window, drew up the blind, and by the light of the moon—it was a clear, frosty night, and everything showed plainly, as in the day—saw the figure of a man hastily escaping over the wall. When it had gained the summit, he caught sight of the face, and recognised it as that of a man whom he knew to have been but a week before released from prison. He believed this man—Dick Girling—to have some

grudge against him, because some information of his some time back had led to his recapture when he had escaped from prison. He had met him in the outskirts of the town the preceding evening, and the fellow had pushed rudely against him. It might be accidental—he was an awkward, heavy lout—but he believed that it had been done on purpose.

It was not difficult to find Mr. Girling's whereabouts. One of the constables who had assisted in his re-capture had met him the previous evening, and Dick had informed him that he was at work on Mr. Rosslyn's farm, and had come into the town for a drop of beer after leaving a note at Fairleigh House. It was coming from that house that the Doctor had met him. There was likely to be some truth in the fellow's story as to his present employer, and two officers were despatched at once,

with a warrant, to secure and bring the person of Richard Girling before Her Majesty's justices then sitting.

The Doctor waited in the Town Hall while they went. He had meant to do other work that morning — work which should have been done last night had it not been for Mrs. Horton being from home when he called on her. That must be postponed yet a few hours longer. It could wait ; but he had a feverish longing to see the fellow secured and punished, not only for the damage he had done to his property last night, and the injury he had attempted to inflict on his person, but for the coarse insolence with which he had pushed against him on the narrow pathway that led from Fairleigh House.

The Doctor was not, generally speaking, a good hater. He was cold, or, at the best, tepid in his likings ; but he was

almost equally so in his antipathies. But this low, coarse brute, who had inflicted on him a scar, which seemed to burn itself into his flesh every time he thought of him—this clown, whose dull face had just witted enough to fashion itself into a scowl when it met his, whose heavy lips had, in the coarse dialect that was all their utterance, dared to menace him—whose slouching shoulders had last night rubbed against his own, and almost pushed him from the path—whose thick, mis-shapen hands had been raised so soon after to hurl missiles at his house and himself—this creature he did hate with something of the loathing and the fierceness, and a little of the fear, he might have felt for some lower organization that for the first time had shown that it was not merely a beast to be driven, and harnessed, and goaded to work, but had learned by some fell instinct that its

strength might be used to destroy and not to serve. It was the insolence of the man who dared to show that he resented the wrong which he imagined the Doctor had put upon him in aiding the law, that goaded him even more than the means which he had taken to mark that resentment.

The magistrates went on with their morning's work, while Dr. Langton sat near them, looking on with a feeling that had more of contempt in it than curiosity, and was hardly defined enough for either. It was so seldom in his life he was brought in contact with the seamy side of humanity, that he seemed for a moment taken into another world, where untidy women brought complaints against their drunken husbands, and swearing, small thefts, and black eyes were the normal order of things. An unpleasant sort of world altogether, suffered to exist for no

good end, that he could see. Surely our social economy could go on as well if every one of such coarse-faced, foul-tongued, unsavoury creatures as, one after another, the magistrates meted out the law to, as far as they knew how to do it, were swept from off our planet altogether.

The time seemed tedious, but in reality he had not so very long to wait before the constables reappeared, accompanied by Mr. Girling and a couple of sympathising friends, who had volunteered, when they heard of what he was accused, to bear witness in his behalf. They had been found all three dining at the little beer-shop where they lodged, and they had returned with the utmost willingness with the officials in the cart in which they had driven over. Dick looked perfectly unconcerned at the charge brought against him; his friends were equally stolid and untroubled.

Dick saw the Doctor, and a gleam that was something not unlike intelligence stole for a moment over his face—only for a moment—the next he was as impenetrably stupid as ever.

He heard the charge brought against him with unruffled composure. He showed no signs of astonishment—but then a Red Indian would as soon have shown signs of surprise at anything as Dick—and when asked for his defence, he affirmed that he was fast asleep at the time the offence was committed, and had gone back home directly he had left the note which he had been charged with at Fairleigh House, and, as far as he knew, the time when he did so must have been eight o'clock. He had spent an hour with his two friends, and then gone to bed—as he had always done since Mr. Rosslyn took him on—in the same room with them, as they all worked together. His

mates had come with him, and they would bear him out in his story.

Which they did—no two could have done it better. They varied a little—five minutes or so—as to the time at which Mr. Girling had joined them in the tap-room of the “Pig and Whistle,” and about ten minutes as to the exact date of their going to bed. And they were not quite agreed as to the quantity of beer they had taken, but in the main points they were as perfect as any two independent witnesses fully bent upon establishing a friend’s innocence could be. Dick Girling had been in their company within an hour from the time he left Fairleigh House, and had been in bed and asleep at the very time when Dr. Langton’s windows were broken.

They were heavy stolid fellows, clods, to all appearance, of the same type as Richard Girling, but there was no rebutting their

evidence ; they might be swearing falsely—the Doctor fully believed they were, and so did one at least of the magistrates, but there was no possibility of finding Dick guilty in the face of their story. He must be held guiltless and discharged, which was done, greatly to Dr. Langton's dissatisfaction.

Dick went away looking not one whit more elated than when he came. His friends followed him, and, with steps as slow and heavy as those of the cattle they tended, they trod their way to the nearest public-house, where Dick treated them with beer as far as his finances would allow. It was too late this dull wintry afternoon to go back to work, so they had but their one resource, beer. It roused two of them to be sufficiently riotous to justify the landlady in requiring them to leave her house as soon as she had ascertained that they had spent all their money, but it did

not rouse Dick. Only his voice was a little thicker, his walk more uncertain than ever, and as he followed his friends from the beer-house with steps not quite so unsteady as their own, any one near enough might have heard him once mutter in his deepest tones something which ran like an accompaniment to the boisterous songs his friends were shouting forth, "Next time 't shall be schoolmeaster's bones i'stead o' his winners, cuss 'im!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE DOCTOR TELLS HIS STORY.

THE Doctor left the Town Hall disappointed of the justice he had come there to seek, but he had something else to do than to sit down and bemoan his wrongs, and more important matters in hand than even the punishment of Dick Girling. He consoled himself as best he could with the reflection that Dick must inevitably find his way back to prison soon, and that it should not be, if possible, at his, Dr. Langton's cost. He resolved the next morning to give orders that the top of his walls

should be thickly studded with broken glass, and the fastenings and shutters of the lower windows of his residence well looked to.

He went at once to Fairleigh House when he left the Town Hall. The short daylight was already fading, and as he entered Mrs. Horton's drawing-room, he saw her sitting by the window, looking, by the firelight which fell on her face and hands, almost young and pretty enough to be indulging in a love-dream on her own account, instead of being employed, as she certainly was, in thinking upon one connected with others. She could see Mr. Rosslyn and her husband's ward from the window by which she sat. They had been to the greenhouse together, where Chubb, who was perfectly aware of all that was going on between them, had been unusually gracious, taking it as a personal compliment

to himself that Miss Lisdale had brought Mr. Rosslyn to look at his plants. Then, instead of returning at once to the house, they had loitered, cold as it was, on the frozen gravel paths, and Master Launce, from a distance, had watched them with some interest, and wondered if people felt the cold when they were spooning.

Mr. Rosslyn had come to pay his farewell visit; he was to leave by the one o'clock train the next day, he ought, perhaps, to have gone sooner, and he certainly ought *not* to have been visiting, as he had been doing, at Fairleigh House day after day. He had, through a friend's interest, obtained an appointment in a mercantile house with a good export trade. Some one was wanted who could write fluent French and German; and the modern languages were the Rev. Charles's strong point. Here was an opening that might lead to

something more suitable to his tastes than either the cure of souls or the tuition of boys ; most likely in time to a better income than he would ever obtain either as curate or assistant master, and in either of those vocations he saw very little chance of bettering his position. Still, at the best, it would be long enough before he should have a home fit to offer to a wife, and he sometimes wondered whether, if ever the time came that he *should* have such a home, Letty would be still free, or the mother of half-a-dozen children. Not the less he continued his visits at Fairleigh House. They *should* come to nothing he said to himself, and with the long, dry, hard road of life stretching itself out bare and bleak before him, why should he not stop to gather these few flowers by the way-side, before he started on the path where never more for him such flowers would grow ?

“Will he speak to-night?” Mrs. Horton asked herself, as she sat and looked at the two in the garden below her window. Nothing was further from Mr. Rosslyn’s intentions than speaking in the manner she implied, but still his voice faltered and grew lower and tenderer, and he hung over his companion; and as they neared the house, she felt herself drawn, how she hardly knew, away from it, and away from the lawn with its clump of evergreens at the back of the house, and the wide gravel paths that wound round it, to the more secluded regions of the fruit and kitchen garden, where the apple trees that Chubb had been lime-washing looked such white ghosts of their former selves, and the very brocoli and Scotch kale looked frost-bitten, and freshness, and crispness, and greenness, and beauty seemed to have left the fruit and vegetable world for ever.

“He must have some motive in keeping her out like this,” said Mrs. Horton to herself, as they came in sight again, but still did not make for the house, and then she turned and shook hands with the Doctor, who, though his sight was not as good as hers, recognised even in the winter twilight Miss Lisdale and her companion, and felt all the stronger in his purpose for the recognition.

“Come and sit by the fire, Doctor,” she said. She did not like the man, although she felt sufficiently interested in him to wish to find him a wife, but she did not wish him to bear the slow torture of watching the woman he loved hanging on another’s words. He could not have this woman; she was too good for him altogether, but that was no reason why he should suffer unnecessary pain. She would have moved from the window, but he prevented her. He could bear the sight of

those two figures vanishing into the gloom, he could bear to look on them when they reappeared ; they might serve to point the moral to his story.

“This will do,” he said, “I am quite warm, if you do not find the neighbourhood of the window chilly.” Then he paused.

“I haven’t come on a pleasant errand, Mrs. Horton.”

Was it anything about the boys ? Of course the maternal heart was first troubled about them. But school had not recommenced, and the whole of the vacation Dr. Langton had scarcely troubled himself about their existence. She was satisfied on that point before he resumed, “Have you any knowledge of the antecedents of my late second master, the Rev. Charles Rosslyn ?”

Then she guessed directly the errand that had brought him. He had come resolved, in one way or another, to prejudice

her against his rival. Let him do it if he could ! She was in arms against him in a moment. Some foolish college scrape which everybody else had long forgotten, or perhaps some silly flirtation when Mr. Rosslyn held a curacy. Most likely not his fault at all. Girls would make such a dead set at clergymen, and especially when they were so good-looking as Mr. Rosslyn. Only it was not very likely that they had ever made a set at the Doctor.

“He comes of a good old family, I believe,” she said ; “he is certainly a gentleman, and I have never yet heard a word against him.”

And her tone implied that she did not wish to hear one now. But Dr. Langton would not be turned from his purpose by any tones, however plain their meaning. What he had to tell he told. Not unfairly ; giving the hard, dry facts in all their ugly-

ness it was true, but still not making that ugliness a bit worse than it really was.

It was only right, he said—and there Mrs. Horton could but agree with him—that she should know how matters were, both as regarded the man whom she had befriended in his helplessness, and the other whom she had admitted so freely into her house. There was the slightest shade of reproach at her imprudence in his voice, but even *that* was not simulated. He had always thought Mrs. Horton's benevolence to the stranger whom she had found at her gates a sheer piece of folly, and he was not sorry to have an opportunity of letting her understand as much.

She was a good woman, and she was grieved to the very heart by what she heard. For, with all her goodness, she was a little influenced by the conventionalities of life, and she rated social position at its

full value. And this Mr. Ross whom she had assisted as one friend might another; whose helplessness and need had made her forget how utterly unknown he was; in whom she had seen nothing but what prepossessed her in his favour, was, after all, hiding from the law, afraid to show his face where it might be remembered, or to hear his own name. He had not meant to defraud.

The Doctor, without going into full details, which perhaps it would have been hardly desirable for him to do, seeing that if he had, Mrs. Horton might not have thought him so wholly innocent in the matter, said that he believed Hartley Rosslyn was guiltless of fraudulent intention, that when he put Mr. Glynne's name to the bill it was with the full intention of providing the money to take it up in due time. He had his own notions of honour, and perhaps

he was as little ready to tell a lie deliberately and wilfully as any man ; therefore in this matter he kept pretty near the truth ; but still the truth was very hard to hear. At any moment the man whom she believed to have nothing more against him than his poverty, whose hand her own had touched, whom she had associated with as a lady with a gentleman, as her equal in education and refinement, might be branded as a felon, sent to herd with the lowest and the vilest, with the offscourings of society, of whom it was almost a horror to think—this man whom she had allowed her boys to visit, and the girl who had been entrusted to her care to tend almost as if she had been his daughter.

But that was not all, nor the worse of it. Charles Rosslyn whom she liked so well, partly because her boys had liked him from the first, and partly for his own sake ; who

was even now walking in her garden, whispering love into the ears of her husband's ward, was this man's son. Rightly or wrongly, his father's shame would be reflected upon him, and be transmitted as a legacy to his children, if ever any were born unto him. The scandal, the exposure, the disgrace—she realised it all, and for a moment wished that the storm had beaten a little more fiercely that dark night upon Hartley Rosslyn, that so there might have been an end of all. It was but for a moment—the slight, bowed frame, the face she had known from the first to be lined with sorrow rather than with years, the thin hair, grey so long before its time, all rose before her, and she felt glad in her heart that she had helped this man, let what would come of it.

“Does Mr. Charles Rosslyn know of this?” she said presently.

“I believe not—I am sure not. His

unhappy father has at least had the discretion to keep his secret from him."

That was a relief. At any rate he had not been guilty of intentional deception. Then she thought of Letty; she must know all, and how would she bear it? At that very moment she might be promising this outcast's son to be his wife, saying words that she would have to unsay—plighting a troth that would have to be broken as soon as made. They were coming into the house at last; she heard their footsteps on the gravel beneath the window. Had Charles Rosslyn said what she had for the last month been expecting him to say? Had Letty given the answer which she felt was the only one she could give? One look would tell her all. She rang for the lamp, and as it came its light fell on the faces of the two who had been loitering so long below. Then she knew

in a moment that Letty was still free, and drew a deep breath of thankfulness. She would have to bear some suffering, and to inflict some ; but things might be managed now. Mr. Rosslyn would leave to-morrow, and before he came again there would be ample time to school Letty how to meet him. She did not make a resolution against match-making for the future. Perhaps she had sufficient self-knowledge to know that, if she did, it would be beyond her power to keep it ; but she resolved not to be led away by her feelings as she had been in this case ; to be very wary and wise before anybody else was allowed the intimacy that Mr. Rosslyn had been, and to take very good care that Dr. Langton at least should not profit by the disclosures he had made. And she felt that if ever she hated a human being in her life, it was that Doctor. She would give up match-making in his

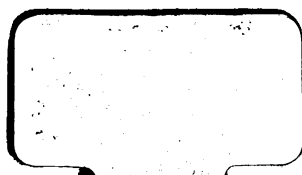
case at any rate. Let him drift on to the end of his days in all the misery of a celibate ! Even Miss Layne would be thrown away upon him ! Painful as this knowledge was, she was very glad to have acquired it ; but how she detested the Doctor for having imparted it to her.

Presently Mr. Rosslyn rose to go. He had not quite finished his packing, he said, and he must go to the Grange to bid his uncle good-bye. But he said all this in a hopeful, buoyant voice, perhaps purposely intended to mislead the Doctor, who, having fulfilled his task, sat on, feeling a grim complacency that he had brought it so fairly to an end. At last he had cleared the way. To-morrow the road would be open for him in his turn. Perhaps it was for his benefit too that Mr. Rosslyn, as he held Miss Lisdale's hand, said to her in a low voice, but still loud enough for others to hear—

“I shall find time to run round with that book to-morrow—shall you be visible as early as eleven?”

Then Mrs. Horton felt that what she had to say had better be said that night, for fear of what the morrow might bring forth, and Cyril Langton felt that he had not told his story an hour too soon.

END OF VOL. II.



the 1990s, the incidence of *S. flexneri* has increased in the United Kingdom [10]. In the United States, *S. flexneri* has been reported as the most common serotype in children with acute bacterial dysentery [11].

There is a paucity of data on the epidemiology of *S. flexneri* in the United Kingdom. In the 1980s, *S. flexneri* was the most commonly isolated serotype from patients with acute bacterial dysentery in the United Kingdom [12]. In the 1990s, *S. flexneri* was the most commonly isolated serotype from patients with acute bacterial dysentery in the United Kingdom [13]. In the 1990s, *S. flexneri* was the most commonly isolated serotype from patients with acute bacterial dysentery in the United Kingdom [13].

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